# RICHARD NEWCOMB

S. ELIZABETH SISSON

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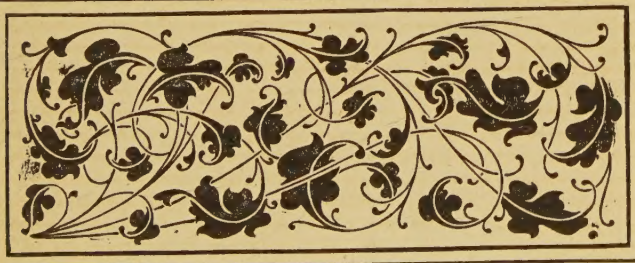
BY

S. ELIZABETH SISSON



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*To my Husband: Without whose kindly co-operation and larger faith this little "home story" had not ventured from the quiet of a parsonage closet shelf, this book is lovingly dedicated.*

*S. E. S.*

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# Richard Newcomb

## I

## A Double Wedding

THE time was away back in the Forties, and the morning was one of the balmiest in blossom-crowned May, when Lynton, a little New England village, was strangely astir.

It was easy to see, upon ever so slight an investigation, that this unusual activity centered in the rustic, ivy-covered village church; for the sound of merry young voices from within was borne out upon the fragrant air through the doors, which stood invitingly open. A glance through them showed a group of the village young people, who, with evergreens and flowers, were making the plain, almost stern walls of the room radiant with beauty.

This all in preparation for a much-anticipated

event, a double wedding. As the wedding-hour is rapidly nearing, it may be well to have an introductory word concerning not only the happy couples who are to be the principals in the event, but the quaint little village of Lynton as well. "Picturesque Lynton" its friends lovingly call it.

The latter was situated, as has already been said, in one of the New England States. A portion of it appeared to half cling or perch upon the rocky hill upon which it was built; the remainder stretched on across Hazel Run, a tiny stream, losing itself in the fertile meadow beyond, the only bit of land near about really suitable for tillage.

In the hill-clinging part, in a very brown, weather-beaten cottage, Rachel Ewing lived with her father and mother, she being the eldest in a large family.

There is a bit of yard in front of the cottage, scrupulously clean, while a rocky walk, bordered on either side by beds of springing crocuses and gorgeous Easter flowers, leads up to the open door, through which, on this same May morning, the breezes come in unhindered.

Though the furnishings are very plain, how tidy and homelike is the little front room! A bright rag-carpet is upon the floor. Filling that

side of the room nearest the fireplace is a long, wooden settee, or "settle," with rockers, which, nearly covered as it is with a great bearskin, hints at a resting-place for the family in its hours of relaxation, or an ever-ready cradle for sleeping babyhood.

Besides this, there are some wooden chairs, and in an opposite corner a stand, upon which we notice a substantially leather-bound family Bible, a Book of Psalms set to music, and a few other volumes, mostly of the sterner religious kind of the day; for Jacob Ewing was a God-fearing man. Daily had his children seen him take down the Bible, and heard him read, in an awesome voice, lessons for their guidance.

At the rear of the house stood a great apple-tree, under whose spreading branches, during many a happy hour, the children of the home had found a delightful playground. This to-day had yielded a part of its treasures for the room's adornment.

On either side of the ancient clock, which stood in the exact center of a very tall, wood mantel, was a bowl of fragrant apple-blossoms; while in a little room just back of the one that has engrossed our attention, deft fingers are pinning sprays of the same sweet blossoms at the

throat, and twining others in the hair, of fair young Rachel, one of the brides, for whom evergreens and flowers are gracing the village church.

The stiff, yet relentlessly exact finger of the old family clock points the hour at which the walk to the church shall begin, and John Stevenson, Rachel's lover, comes in to claim his bride.

Amid the hurry (yes, and heartaches) of this supreme moment, we turn and speed down the rocky street, and on across the little wooden bridge. Here the houses are, perhaps, not cleaner nor yet more homelike than in the hilly part; but a more liberal use of paint, shutters at the windows, and here and there a pretentious two-story, tells of greater worldly prosperity.

At the gateway leading up to one of the most comfortable of these homes stands an old family carryall, and just now, coming out from her mother's doorway (her father having lain in the churchyard more than a year), is Margaret Allen, leaning upon the arm of William Newcomb, whose name she is so soon to bear.

Now, while the two bridal parties are on the way to the church, there will be time for a hasty glance at the home of Margaret, and to glean something of the history of the two girls.

From the day when Rachel Ewing and Margaret Allen first trudged off together to the village school, a peculiar friendship had existed between the two. Though Margaret's father had owned much of the fertile meadow-land beyond the village, while Rachel's could claim as his own but the weather-beaten cot that housed his bairns; yet so sturdy and common-sense was the New England atmosphere of that day, that because of the honesty of purpose and integrity of heart which Jacob Ewing was known to possess, he stood quite as high in the esteem of his neighbors as though broad acres had been his; hence there had not been a thought of anything incongruous in the abiding friendship between the girls.

Together they had sat on the low, wooden benches of the school; later on, their voices had rung out together in song in the church, in whose communion each had been raised. It was fitting, therefore, that to-day they should stand together at its simple chancel, while the mystic words were said that should change them, at a bound, from light-hearted girls into women, looking fearlessly into the face of the future.

The interest of the entire village had centered in this event; for not only were the young

people well known and loved, but it was further known that, on the morning following the marriage, they were to leave forever their village home, make the long journey westward, and that somewhere on those Western prairies, of whose dangers rumor had much to say, two new homes would arise. The two great covered wagons that were to bear them westward had stood, for the last week, back of the village smithy, objects of supreme interest; hence it was not strange that at an early hour the church had been filled with an eager assemblage of friends. After this digression, we, too, will join the waiting assembly, and it will not be out of place if, as the wedded pairs slowly pass down the aisles, we turn with the audience for a passing glance.

John Stevenson and his bride, Rachel, are in front. There is no mistaking the plain, rugged honesty of his face, while the browned hands, and, indeed, the whole bearing, in some subtle manner, tells of a life-experience that has been largely a hand-to-hand struggle with a rocky New England farm.

Unconsciously to himself, though, there is that in the face which proclaims a victory gained. His eyes rest lovingly upon his bride with an air of fond, trustful proprietorship.

Large of build, rugged, kindly of disposition, the student of human nature sees at once that he will lean upon his wife, consult with her, be influenced by her, as neither she nor he suspects. Thus far, life has held but few joys for him; for his mother had died many years ago, and with her all that might have made his life joyous. Little wonder that he invites the future.

And she? Beautiful? They who know her best scarcely think of beauty in connection with her; yet there is no plainness in the clear complexion, nor in the shapely hands, though these are hard with toil; but not one in all that company of village folk is thinking of these, but rather the village heart has responded to the loving, helpful spirit which shines in the large gray—at times, almost blue—eyes. As she is passing, these accidentally rest for a moment upon the eager, upturned face of a neighbor's child, and in an instant the little heart is gladdened by a smile of recognition; and in the smile and the self-forgetfulness that allowed it, is mutely revealed that innate, nameless "something" which draws to the side of the possessor little children, with their childish trials, and dumb animals, that instinctively turn for protection.

Though a smile so readily comes to the

mouth, there is a firmness about the clearly-cut lips; yes, a firmness that it is easy to believe might become akin to sternness. Somehow, as Rachel passes out of the rustic church, we involuntarily recall grewsome stories of young girl martyrs, and we mentally aver, this New England girl-wife will have abiding principles and maintain them.

If John Stevenson and his bride have proven an interesting study, William Newcomb and his fair Margaret are not less so. The former had come to Lynton but a twelvemonth ago as the manager of a large sawmill, which was fast changing the great forests about Lynton into acres of stumps, which later should give way to waving fields of ripening grain.

So well had he deported himself that he had not only become a strong factor in the village life, winning the esteem of all, but the love of beautiful Margaret Allen as well. It is easy to see that nature has cast him in an entirely different mold from that of rugged John Stevenson. There is a restless acuteness about the eyes which indicate greater business ability, and about him an easy air, in his smart new wedding-suit, which proclaims an acquaintance with the world.

He is a communicant at the altar of the same

church as are the others; but seeing him, we can not repress a speculation as to what would be his course should duty and worldly prosperity clash.

But John Stevenson's eyes do not rest more lovingly upon his bride's than do William Newcomb's upon the fair Margaret. However different otherwise they may be, they are one in love for their chosen companions.

As has been said, Margaret's home had been one of comfort and plenty. Her parents were found each Sabbath among the worshipers, yet to serve God had not been with Richard Allen, as with Jacob Ewing, the supreme motive of life. Much dearer to him than thoughts of God had been his fertile acres, with accompanying flocks and herds. Indeed, in his heart he had fixed for himself a creed, the liberality of which, had they but known it, would have startled the staid people with whom he worshiped. Yet his family understood it well, and none better than Margaret. From the time she could toddle, she had been his chosen companion.

As she grew older, various traits peculiar to the father appeared in the child, until it came to be a family saying, "Margaret is father over again."

We have already said she was beautiful. As she left the altar on her wedding-day, she looked, indeed, the embodiment of loveliness. Added to rare regularity of features were a beautiful form, graceful carriage, and an almost faultless complexion. A wavy mass of brown hair was brushed back from the forehead and coiled about the shapely head. Seeing her, we see a beautiful picture; yet, as with many another picture, there is a sense of dissatisfaction. Can it be that in the graceful curl of those lips, in the poise of that delicate chin, there is a hint of selfishness? Or do the eyes, dark hazel as they are, lack in gentleness? We can scarcely tell. Yet the face is not one we would care to go to with a heart-ache, especially if, to ease the ache, self-denial would be required.

Just now she is strong in the new love which has stirred her heart, and she is bravely going to the hardships of pioneer-life. Indeed, if there are any hardships, they are lost in the strong glamour which love and distance have thrown about that strange new life beyond.

But the last echo has died out from the church, and each couple are now in separate homes. Many tears mingle with the wedding festivities; for the covered wagons stand now, one

at Rachel's and one at Margaret's door; and with an agony the young people can not know or guess, each mother packs away in the roomy rear such articles as space will permit. There are chests of linens, of bedding, jars of home-made sweets, and provisions for the long journey.

The next day, amid sobs and heartaches, the home-nest is forever left. Groups of villagers gather at the brow of the hill from whence the road stretches on westward. They look long and earnestly, and finally turn each to their homes. They have seen disappear around the curve the last faint flutter of white. The village home of Rachel and Margaret would know them no more.

The old, yet ever new, miracle had been re-enacted. The stranger of yesterday becomes more than home, parents, or friends. Strange? No; for centuries before, He foreshadowed this home-leaving when he said, "They twain shall become one flesh."

## II

## A Westward Journey—Peter Cartwright

HOWEVER great the sympathy that might bid us linger with those in the broken homes, our interest henceforth lies with those just out of sight, and to them we turn.

Slowly the great wagons creaked on. Margaret, in the agony of the parting, had flung herself upon an improvised couch, which loving hands had provided for her comfort, and lay there bitterly sobbing. Rachel, with tear-stained face, kept fluttering a bit of white cambric, as a last adieu, until a bend in the road shut out forever the little village. Presently the last familiar hill or farmhouse was passed. New roadside scenes claimed the attention, and it began to dawn on those brave young people that the old life was forever gone. Yet a future, fascinating in its very strangeness, awaited them.

One of the happiest qualities of youth is its elasticity. A wave of sorrow may sweep over it, before which it bows as a sapling before a storm; but such is its natural spring that it

speedily rights itself and is erect again. Therefore it is not strange that our young friends were soon intensely interested in the novel experience which was theirs.

There were meals to be cooked by the wayside. The woods abounded in game. Squirrel leaped among the branches of the trees, and chattered noisily down. There were great flocks of quail and of wild turkeys. More than once, as they came to ford a stream, they would startle a herd of timid deer.

There was a brace of trusty "flintlocks" in each wagon, so the meals were always supplied with the choicest meats. Then there was the novelty of going to sleep with the stars blinking down ever so familiarly.

Nor were the incidents always of the pleasantest type. The angry bark of hungry wolves became a familiar sound after nightfall. Once, Rachel was awakened by an intruder, which proved to be a large black bear, poking his investigating nose into the wagon; and again—and this proved a real fright—being left alone one day for a little while at a nooning, the girl-wives were surprised by a party of Indians. Friendly, and returning from a trading-post—this they did not know. Seeing that the women were alone and

unprotected, and of course frightened, they thought it a good time to indulge in a few war-whoops, which they did, brandishing in the meanwhile the most ferocious-looking knives, and giving free exhibitions of their skill with the bow, winding up with searching the wagons for trinkets and valuables, in which pastime they were interrupted by the return of the men. After some parleying, the unwelcome visitors disappeared in the dense woods; not that they were afraid of the two, but that, even at this early date, they had learned the wisdom of not offending the Washington Great Father.

As has been said, the journey began in May. Many of the streams were still swollen from the spring rains, and were without bridges.

The roads in many places were not more than a bridle-path, and were often well-nigh impassable. The plan of the journey was to travel in wagons to Pittsburg, there embark upon flatboats, and journey down the Ohio River as far as Cincinnati, already a prosperous city. Once there, they expected to make the remainder of the journey westward in their wagons, which would be comparatively easy, as the route lay mostly over the "National Road," this being a kind of pike or "built" road, under national supervision,

as its name indicates, which, before the era of railroads, contributed in no small measure to the rapid settlement of the States as far west as Indiana.

Wonderful stories of the rich prairies that formed so large a part of that great western Territory known as Illinois had reached their eastern home. These marvelous tales of the soil's fertility, as well as the unusual business facilities, had made this the objective point.

So, keeping this end in view, they jolted on, day after day, on this strange bridal journey.

The modern young husband buys a ticket, and he and his bride whirl rapidly away. They "do" mountain or seaside resort, or tip waiters in European hotels, and return, at length, weary to their homes, already disgusted with life—happily if not with each other.

Our old-fashioned lovers proceeded more slowly. What if now and then the road was rough, or there was a half hour's intense anxiety in crossing a swollen stream? The greater part of the time the skies were blue; birds, in all the ecstasy of home-building, sang for them their most joyous notes; flowers, daintier than ever grew 'neath glass roofs, blossomed for them; and —O all-sufficient fact—they had each other!

And what with plans for the homes that were to be, the days were none too long, and Pittsburg was at length reached.

Good weather attended the travelers in their float down the Ohio. The flatboats in which they journeyed had a kind of sheltered room (cabin) for the passengers, and an inclosed outer deck for the wagons and horses. Black Nell, one of the horses John had driven, rebelled at this new experience, and caused quite a commotion one night by an attempt to jump overboard; but at length, like many a human, found it best to become reconciled to the inevitable.

In all Rachel's life she had not known so much leisure, and it was to her, as well as Margaret, a never-ceasing delight to watch the green, shadowy outlines of the gliding shores, the plash of the water about the boat, and the strange life about them.

At Cincinnati they disembarked, and certainly the world was going "west;" for there were many covered wagons like their own, and in company with some of these they again turned their faces westward, this time traveling over the anticipated, well-built National Road.

They no longer had the world to themselves; for covered wagons were everywhere. Some,

new and smart, like their own. Under flapping canvas were hearts as brave and light as their own. Some were weather-beaten and travel-stained. Some of these held discouraged-looking men and tired women, who strained their eyes toward the west, and hoped it were "better farther on." Behind some of the wagons the family cow was tied, who at times protested at her halter, and bawled for green pastures left behind. Beside some of the wagons little children trudged—sometimes in the frolicsomeness of childhood, sometimes preternaturally old and tired, or laid themselves down on the hard cot of the wagon in pain and with burning fever. Once our travelers came upon a group by the roadside. No need to ask questions. A little open grave, dug under a friendly beech; a still, baby form; and the agonized sobs of a young mother, for whom the sun would never shine the same again,—told the story of hardships that had proven too great. Brave-hearted pioneers! There is danger that in the completeness of our civilization to-day we forget with what sacrifice the foundations were laid.

Our friends might have gone, as did many emigrants of that day, the entire journey down the Ohio and then up the Mississippi; but the

added cost was a barrier; besides, they wanted to judge for themselves of the country and of the best place to locate. Finally, Indianapolis, then a thrifty young city, was reached; and still the horses' heads were turned westward, till the Wabash Valley was reached.

"O dear!" groaned Margaret. "Why, what kind of a road is this?" She might well ask; for just then the front wheels of the wagon gave a lurch downward, and the horse gave a sudden pull, or Margaret would certainly have been thrown to the ground. These plunges and jerks, amid the worst specimen of mud the travelers had yet encountered, continued throughout the day, causing more discomfort than they had yet known. The delightsome "National" having ended, they were now experiencing a stretch of "corduroy road," which, for the benefit of the modern bicycler on asphalt, it may be well to explain, was made by cutting lengths from trees of various sizes, and laying them crosswise in the slush or mud. Thus a sort of underpinning of saplings was made. As there was no uniformity in the size of the lengths, and as they became in time pushed out of place, the jolting can be better imagined than described. But bad as the "corduroy" was, it was the best device

known to the "fathers" to make these newly cut-out roads through woodland and thicket passable.

It is little wonder that all rejoiced when the smart young city of Springfield was reached, where they had decided to stop for a time until they could decide upon a location.

Among the travelers they had fallen in with during their journey were several who were loud in their praises of Burrtonville, a mere stripling of a town on the Illinois River. These agreed that this place must shortly become a manufacturing center, citing as arguments its superior water-power and the enterprise of its citizens, shown already by the building of a railroad connecting it with the growing interior towns of the State, and promising on farther westward, bridging the Illinois itself.

As both Rachel and Margaret needed rest, it was decided that they should remain where they were, while their husbands would join a prospecting party of men who would visit Burrtonville and several other points, if it were necessary.

Once there, it did not take the keen, business eye of William Newcomb long to discover the advantages of the young town. Moreover, there was a chance of steady employment offered.

Upon the banks of the river stood a newly-completed flouring-mill, the first and only one in all that section of the country. Already its great water-wheel was kept busy churning the water, as it ground the grain of many miles of territory. By a happy chance he secured a position not greatly inferior to that of manager, and so was ready to go back to Margaret with the story of his good fortune.

The rich, black soil of the gently-undulating prairies that crept up to the water's edge, and upon which the town was built, charmed John Stevenson, used as he had been to the rocky hillsides about Lynton. And he was a happy young man the day he bargained for a quarter-section that lay not two miles from the town—happy, though years of hard work and, as farmers phrase it, "good luck" must be his before he could call these acres his own; happy, although upon the land there was not a roof to shelter either man or beast.

The question of homes being settled, they lost no time in joining the waiting ones at Springfield. These, although left for a time alone, had not been unhappy. The last hundred miles of travel had told on each, and they welcomed the rest of their quiet lodging-house. Besides, when

they cared to go out, there was much to interest them in the strange, new, western life.

Their curiosity and interest were greatly aroused by what they heard concerning a "gathering" in the neighborhood—new and strange to them; but certainly, from the conversation about them, a feature of the new life. This gathering was called a "camp-meeting," and was well named; for many would come from miles distant, as well as nearer at hand, bring with them a few articles necessary for their comfort, camp out in the big stretch of woodland called the "camp-ground," and spend days, or even weeks, in religious service. But such strange stories as were told, not only of these services, but of the minister in charge! Indeed, his original sayings were a fruitful theme among their fellow-lodgers at every meal.

"Well, whatever happens," both Rachel and Margaret agreed, "we must visit these grounds, and see for ourselves before we go further." To this their husbands, upon their return, readily assented, and the next day they set out to attend an evening service.

The "camp-ground," as has been said, consisted of several acres of heavy woodland, affording plenty of shade for men, women, and chil-

dren—and horses. An attempt had been made to clear out the underbrush and to cut away enough of the trees to allow a central meeting-ground.

As the party drove into the deep shade of the woods, a weird scene presented itself. Rude shelters were erected by the campers. About some of these, women were busy with the evening meal. Echoes of a camp-meeting song, or the voice of earnest supplication in some neighboring tent (tent by courtesy), told of zealous preparation for the grand evening service. Great flaring tallow-dips, nailed here and there to the trees, lent an uncanny air to the whole, which was not lessened by the glare of burning brush-heaps located in different parts of the grounds, and fed by men and boys, which served a double purpose, as the visitors learned before the evening was through—that of lighting the grounds, as well as furnishing an ever-present illustration to the preacher of what awaited those who scoffed at his exhortation: "Turn ye! O turn ye! Why will ye die?"

The crowd was gathering in the straw-littered inclosure where the services were held, and thither, too, went our friends. The platform upon which the preacher stood had been made

by felling two trees of about the same size, cutting away the tops and branches, and arranging upon them a puncheon floor. The utility of the platform was further enhanced by a clapboard roof, the back and sides being formed of closely-interwoven branches cut from trees.

But the settings of the picture faded into insignificance before the preacher and the preaching. Surely there had never before been heard any so forceful or so peculiar in its immediate effects. So, at any rate, thought our little group of New Englanders.

Pathos, sublimity, caustic wit, scathing rebuke of sin and of sinners, even of individuals, jostled each other on the lips of the preacher, who was none other than Peter Cartwright, one of the most unique personalities of the Illinois of that day. Tall and of rugged build, with hair brushed back in a kind of shock from his forehead, he towered a very giant, who had come to announce the destruction of the wicked. His eyes, keen and searching, looked out from under shaggy brows, or flashed fire when a miscalculating band of rowdies thought to intimidate preacher or congregation. What caught and held the attention of our friends was the personal directness of the discourse. The preacher taught and urged

a distinct work of grace in the heart—not to-morrow, not next week, but *now*—and a consecration of one's life, whatever be the calling, to the Lord.

And then, the genuine oratory! There was something about this preacher that held the breathless attention of the people. We call it "oratory," but who could analyze it? There was in it fearlessness, certainly; there was earnestness; and shall we not believe there was a Divine gift for the occasion? Whatever the secret, the fact remains that, when the preacher was at his best, the audience became as one great individual, upon whose heart-strings he played as does the minstrel upon the harp, and they were swayed as is the forest by a great wind. An instance of this power had occurred only a few evenings before. The preacher was picturing the terrors of the judgment-day. With the skill of a true artist, color after color was laid on—now somber, now lurid, always awful. The congregation became breathless; the strain, intense. A supernatural stillness reigned, broken only by here and there a suppressed shudder or sob. Suddenly he paused, leaned over, and, in an awed whisper, uttered the one sentence, "List! He cometh!"

As it happened, a very short distance from the grounds there was a wooden bridge, with a floor of loose, clattering boards, and as the echoes of the speaker's voice died away, a wagon was driven noisily across. The noise, coming as it did, seemed supernatural. A woman dropped upon her knees, and shouted, "Hear the rumbling of His chariot!" The effect on the audience was overwhelming. Instantly there arose a mingled sound of groans, supplicating prayer, shouts, and sobs; and although the cause of the noise was soon ascertained, fully fifty persons crowded forward to the altar, and were converted.*

But nothing out of the usual course occurred upon the occasion of the visit of our young friends. The sermon was followed by the usual

* It was the privilege of a member of the writer's family to be present at a camp-meeting, in the summer of 1897, when an old gentleman, known alike for his intelligence and culture, as well as for his deep piety, in giving his testimony, related the above incident. He was not unaware of the prevailing spirit of criticism, even in the Church, of anything bizarre or unnatural. He added, by way of testimony, that he had personally watched the religious career of the entire number. Many had died in the faith triumphant, and all who remained "were happy on the way." He closed his testimony by adding, "Personally, I have always thanked God for the providence of the wagon."

"altar service." And such a service! How they crowded the rude wooden bench, young and old!

Presently a sister "got religion."

"Look! look at her face!" said Rachel, excitedly, pulling John's sleeve, that he might see the wonderful transformation; for it was transformed. The woman was plain in appearance, and evidently a daughter of toil; but about her face there was a glow that, it is not irreverent to say, brought to mind the story of that other "Transfiguration." She began to shout, and others took up the strain. Back in the congregation, a little knot has gathered about a prostrate form. It is that of a man who has been "seeking" for several days. He lies rigid, motionless, and, to all appearances, dead. His friends, nothing alarmed, sing and pray, and wait for him to "come through," which he does after a time, with shouts of joy.

Strange, blessed history of the pioneer Church! The so-called refinement of a later day may smile, and, with delicately-pursed lips, may whisper, "Mere eccentricities!" But, after all, it is borne in upon us that these fathers and mothers in Israel really "got" a "something" that lifted them above the hardships of a frontier life; a "something" that, in many instances, trans-

formed the wickedest into the most devout; a "something" that implanted that far-seeing self-denial which founded the colleges and built the churches, which together have made to-day's boasted civilization possible. In short, they "came through" to such a high type of Christian life that we may well withhold our criticism and be proud to do them homage.

When John and Rachel Stevenson found themselves alone that night, there was a quiet talk between them, and as a result of the evening's strange service, a consecration of their lives, in a sense different from anything they had ever known, took place. In an adjoining room, William and Margaret, too, discussed what they had heard and seen; but with them a sense of the grotesque, eccentric, and rude held chief place, and furnished not a little amusement.

The hospitality and welcome accorded to strangers were a marked feature of the times, and the little party made many acquaintances before leaving the grounds, among whom was Mr. Cartwright himself. Though his eyes may have flashed fire as he rebuked an offender, there was no mistaking their kindly spirit as he questioned them concerning their plans. Lovingly as a father might, he urged the immediate duty of identi-

fying themselves with Christian people, pointing out that the habits formed in the first years would shape the whole life. While talking, he drew from the cavernous depths of a pair of saddlebags near at hand some books and a few copies of a newspaper.

For a moment he paused, while from under the shaggy brows a look, at once keen and critical, darted from one to the other. Then he continued: "You will want, in the new home, not only religion as a corner-stone, but intelligence, and whether you read, and what you read, will come to mean everything; therefore, however small your income, I entreat you, spend a part of it for good books. Further, if the homes you build are to be intelligent in the best sense, you will need a kind of current Christian literature which even books do not supply. Here are a few copies of a periodical designed to meet this need. Take them; perhaps their reading may make these last few miles of your journey pleasanter."

Then, telling them that he would see them again, as Burrtonville was one of his preaching-points, he bade them God-speed.

The following morning the last stage of their journey was resumed. William had much to tell Margaret of the new home and business, and

neither gave more than a passing thought to the kindly advice of their new friend. But in the rear wagon, John and Rachel jolted on, and at times their conversation was as serious as even the zealous Mr. Cartwright could have desired.

## III

## Getting Settled

ANOTHER day and night found these emigrants in what was to be their new home, Burrtonville. When each had grown to be old, they never forgot the strange newness and unfinished appearance of the town. The streets were yet grassy, and such little houses! Nearly all of logs. Still, there was an air of bustling activity. People went about as if there was a world to build, and but a little time to build it in; and none caught the contagion quicker than William Newcomb. He at once began work in the mill, and in a little cottage, conveniently near, Margaret began her housekeeping.

This little home was very plain on the outside, but warm and cozy within, and soon, under the deft touches of Margaret's hands, the "home air" began to grow.

As for the Stevensons, the season was so far advanced, the staple crop of corn could not be raised on the farm; so a few vegetables for use were planted, and preparations were made for

sowing wheat later on. There being no house, John's first care was to build one, in the meanwhile renting a room in Burrtonville till it should be completed. Very soon a log-house of two rooms was ready for occupancy, into which they at once moved. This may not have looked inviting from the outside; for the logs were rough-hewn, the spaces between the logs or "chinks" were mortar-filled, and the great outside chimney hinted at comfort rather than beauty. But inside! Ah! when the great fire began to crackle in the capacious fireplace, as it did in the early autumn; when John, weary of his day's work of digging or plowing, came home late in the evening to find a savory supper awaiting him, and an earnest, strong face that lighted at his coming,—you would then have forgotten the rough outside, had you seen this, and would have exclaimed, "I have found a home."

A rude stable was built for the faithful animals that had journeyed with them; a well dug, and provided with a great "sweep," which lent a picturesqueness to the scene. With these preparations they considered themselves ready for the first winter in the West.

Just two miles distant was the growing, spreading town of Burrtonville, constantly calling

for workers. Here, when the weather prevented further work on the farm, he worked, that he might have something "ahead" when the spring should call him back to the farm.

While the young husbands were busy, each at his chosen work, time might have seemed long and wearisome to the girl-wives had it not been for the old sweet friendship, which wonderfully brightened these first months of exile from friends.

Often when John was driving out, Margaret would accompany him. Rachel would meet them both at the lane, and proudly escort Margaret to the cozy sitting-room, where, perhaps with laughter, they would recall some incident of the long journey, or with tender regret talk of the dear old homes at Lynton. Before such a visit had ended, Margaret, with the air of a connoisseur, would inspect Rachel's great brood of hens, interesting because they were doing duty, as was evidenced by the goodly sum of "egg-money" that came weekly into their owner's purse; or pay her respects to the family cow, that furnished these farmer folks with butter and milk.

Then, again, Rachel, with a bit of sewing, would spend a delightful day with Margaret, when much the same program would be enacted.

But there were stormy winter days and long evenings when each must stay by her own fireside.

These hours of enforced idleness might have been productive of what members of a later generation, when thrown upon their own resources, wearily designate as *ennui*. Not so at the farm. To them the earnest preacher had not preached in vain. Already they had begun to find a new world awaiting them in the few books which they owned; besides, they had come to find, as he had suggested, a welcome friend in their home paper. In it were helpful suggestions for farm and home, discussions touching upon every question of Church or State, stories of travel and of biography, besides the weekly bulletin of the great onward march of the Church of Christ. After an evening spent around his fireside, reading aloud to interested Rachel, and talking over with her the subjects discussed, this young farmer went about his tasks in a different spirit. He was no longer the plain, individual John Stevenson, working out his own little problem of existence, but a unit of a great whole, who, by doing the duties of the hour, was unconsciously keeping step with the onward march of that great army which was ushering in a better civilization

and bringing the world into harmony with the ideal of its Creator.

More than once, Rachel tried to tell her friend Margaret something of this pleasure; but the latter would laughingly say: "O Rachel, you are Jacob Ewing's own daughter, thinking more of a creed than of aught else;" for, like some others, she refused to believe that a Christian literature could be other than a creed exponent.

Perhaps of all the old sweet associations at Lynton, nothing was so greatly missed as the little village church. Upon coming to Burrtonville, our friends found that the settlers before them had taken pains at once to see that a place for worship was provided. So on a grassy knoll stood a little "meeting-house." This, like most of its associates, was built of logs. It differed in denomination from that in which our friends had been raised, but was one with it in the doctrine of right living.

Here, every two weeks, came a young and zealous "circuit-rider," and on more state occasions "the elder," of camp-ground fame, who preached, as was his wont, of free salvation and the necessity for immediate repentance.

On the very first Sabbath after their arrival in Burrtonville, four Church letters were handed

the young minister, and the little congregation almost startled them by the warmth of their Western welcome. "Yes, there are some things different," Rachel was saying to John that night, and her eyes had a far-away look as the vision of the home church arose; "but these people are kind, and this is to be our home, so we can not afford to be critical. Perhaps we can make ourselves of use."

"Such a queer little church, and such odd people!" was Margaret's comment, as she and her husband together discussed the hearty handshakes and loud "Amens" of the morning.

"Still, it is a type of this sincere western life, of which we are now a part," rejoined her husband. "And," continued he, "as we can not have our staid old pastor, nor be a part of his well-ordered flock, neither is it right for us to live out of the Church. Therefore let us hope, after awhile, things will not seem so strange."

Margaret made no audible reply; but there came echoing through her mind remembrances of many sayings of her father, as together they had tramped about the farm, and in her heart she said, "It amounts to but little after all."

By this first public step, both the Newcombs and Stevensons became well known. As Rachel

had said, kind hearts beat beneath the rough exteriors, and much interest was manifested in the welfare of the strangers, and on many an occasion a helping hand was held out.

The Newcombs really knew nothing of the privations of frontier life; for William had a good position, while Margaret's patrimony had at once secured to them a comfortable home. But the Stevensons knew by experience every phase of home-building. Still, they were young, strong, and happy; each worked with a will; and by the time spring had come, bringing the plowing and sowing, the humble log-house had blossomed into a home. Much of the furniture was of the young husband's making. There was a stand, very like the one in Rachel's old home, and on it was a family Bible, very like its New England counterpart. Besides, there was a steadily-growing pile of carefully-read books and papers.

One feature of the room, purely ornamental, must not be overlooked. Among the treasures Rachel had brought from her home had been an ivy-root from the glossy green which had crept and clung to the walls of the village church. This she planted in a rude earthen pot. Certainly Western soil did not disagree with it; for it grew, and, guided over the little narrow window, spread

itself, and growing, covered the rough logs with a living beauty.

We will now leave our young friends for a time. It will be theirs to fight their own battles with the privations and experiences incident to pioneer life. We shall not look in on them again until many years have come and gone. We must not fail to chronicle the fact, however, that by the time the old apple-tree back in Rachel's girlhood home had again scattered its sweet blossoms to the air, the Angel of Life had knocked at the door of each humble home. At the Newcombs' there was rejoicing over a son, which the happy young father pronounced as handsome as his mother. In this he was not alone; for the numerous visitors, competent witnesses all, said: "What a wonderful likeness! Just his mother over again." But his appearance mattered little to the young mother, who, in a happiness of content which she had not dreamed, cuddled close to her heart sweet baby Richard. In the little log farmhouse, Rachel, too, could be found crooning a lullaby to a dear little morsel of humanity, a boy, who had John's own honest eyes, which, even in its very young babyhood, looked about quite as gravely as if life had already proven quite a serious matter. But the mouth that Rachel kissed

was very like her own, and it was not unlikely that something of her own nature lay hidden there. "What shall we call the baby?" This question remained unanswered, even till baby Richard began to look knowingly when his name was called. Finally it came the "elder's" time for his quarterly visit. He had already gotten to call the hospitable farmhouse home; so, of course, he must admire the sturdy boy. Taking him gently in his arms, he said, "And is this Francis Asbury?" And that night, John wrote in the leather-bound family Bible the chosen name, Francis Asbury Stevenson.

## IV

## After Fifteen Years

FIFTEEN years! How much may happen, what changes occur, in fifteen years, even when the conditions are settled! But in a new western town, that length of time may stand for a half-century in an older community.

Burrtonville had moved forward like a young giant, and the summer of 1858 looked down upon a smart little city, that was already fulfilling the expectations of its early friends.

Rows of really good buildings lined the business streets. Comfortable homes, many almost luxurious, had largely taken the place of the log-cabins of the past. On the knoll, still green and grassy, stood a neat frame church, with slender spire, and rich-toned bell. The little log meeting-house, itself the strongest factor in to-day's prosperity, has given way to its more dignified successor.

As a business center, Burrtonville was attracting the attention of many. The Illinois River, upon which it was built, not only furnished a suf-

ficient water-power for the mills upon its banks, and opened up communications with the rapidly-growing interior towns of the State, but through its outlet into the broad Mississippi brought the markets of the great cities to the doors of the business men of Burrtonville. Besides this, two railroads, with their snorting engines, now connected it with the East and North, and were pushing on to the great Western beyond.

For these reasons, and because of having been first in the field with its mill, Burrtonville had become a center of supply for grain and flour. The little flouring-mill, into which, fifteen years ago, William Newcomb entered as an employee, had trebled its capacity.

Let us for a moment look in upon its counting-room. There at the desk is the proprietor, a keenly alert business man, upon whom his forty years sit lightly. We recognize the employee of other days, William Newcomb, now everywhere spoken of as one of Burrtonville's most enterprising citizens.

Shortly after his arrival he had grasped the financial possibilities of real estate, and making some fortunate investments was able to make the first payment upon the mill, which was offered for sale. Once in his hands, he managed its business so suc-

cessfully that he became its sole owner, and soon became known as a rich man, to whom the little world of Burrtonville took off its hat in honor, after the manner of the greater world outside.

About a year before the reopening of our story, on one of the best streets, his new home had been built. It was large and roomy, of brick, and stood in the center of beautiful, well-kept grounds. While a dweller in a modern house might miss some of to-day's luxuries and conveniences, yet comfort was evidenced on every side. Through the center ran a great hall, on one side of which doors opened into the large double parlors, whose side and folding doors were suggestive of merry companies of young people, or statelier and more dignified ones of older. From the other side of the hall, one entered the "living-room," and the large dining-room beyond; and a great oaken stairway led on to roomy and sunny chambers above.

Over all this, Margaret, the girl-wife of long ago, is the presiding genius. In every graceful poise of the well-rounded form, as well as in the still regular features, is seen the maturing of the old girlish beauty.

Richard, the first born, is now a bright, handsome lad of fourteen, while a sister—Marie—has been his playmate for twelve years. Therese, the

household pet, is a petite little maiden of eight summers.

If fate has dealt thus kindly with those of the city, we turn with eager expectancy to the farm.

Though Burrtonville had stretched itself out in nearly every direction, it had not seen fit to encroach upon the farm, so no fortuitous chance circumstance had come to the help of the inmates, yet by patient, plodding, self-denying hard work on the part of both John and Rachel, every foot of the farm was now their own, and unincumbered by debt or mortgage.

Any one who has had an experience in building a home, or making habitable a wild piece of land, knows that, ordinarily, it is the work of years. Yet our farmer friends had been patient and willing persistently to plod, so necessary outlays were met as they came; and now, as we have said, the farm is theirs. Necessary improvements have been made, sleek cows graze in the pastures, and a great orchard back of the house is a source of enjoyment as well as of profit.

The improvement of the farm itself was more easily visible than that of the house; for the family still occupied the two original rooms of the log-house, with two others, which their growing needs had made imperative. A new home had been

planned; but the one with farm experience knows that the comfortable home must come *last*. Yet, though the house was of logs, it was often said that, in all the country, there was not a more home-like spot to be found.

It is hard to analyze the something that makes a home. Yet it is none the less a verity, which even a stranger may recognize as he crosses the threshold—a something that draws alike those with a heartache to its fireside and the romping children of a neighbor as well. But whatever it might be, this farm-home was certainly rich in its possession.

It may be the happy group of boys and girls it now sheltered contributed not a little to this "home feeling," as they romped over the rag carpet by the great open fire, with its "backlog" and curious network of "forelog" and sputtering boughs of hickory.

Yes, the years had been fraught with changes, and among those apparent to even the most casual observer was the remarkable development of character, especially noticeable in the Stevensons. Not only for rugged, unflinching honesty was John known among his neighbors, but they had come to know that as he turned a furrow or sowed his grain he did it intelligently, and many in perplexity learned to find a wise counselor in the quiet man, who betrayed by his conversation an unusual

familiarity with matters outside his daily life. But it was in the little church, which had so long ago heartily welcomed the strangers, that John and Rachel Stevenson had grown to be most loved, most depended upon; for during all the years, with a regularity equal to the coming of the Sabbath itself, the faithful team and light wagon bore the family to Church. One of the recent innovations had been the organization of a Sunday-school, and none could be found so capable for leader as the erstwhile timid John. And Rachel, with her years of quiet home-reading, was fitted to become a valued teacher; indeed, had she lived in these later years of woman's organizations she would have been seized upon at once as a "worker." It was curious to note the growing oneness of this twain. With them the Scriptural prophecy was being rapidly fulfilled. Perhaps the cause of this lay in their quiet farm-life, every detail of which was planned together; but we are inclined to think it began in the long winter evenings, when, after the roaring, crackling hickory fire had begun to throw out its richest glow, the plain walnut stand was drawn out from its corner, the candle lighted, and the reading begun. At first, when the children were little, they were each tucked snugly away in their trundlebed. (Years afterward they loved to recall how they

would lie awake as long as possible, listening to the rich cadence of their mother's voice, or to the fuller, deeper, yet not less kindly one of their father.) When they became old enough it became their pride, indeed a coveted honor, to take their turn as "reader" for the evening.

Through these years a determination for the higher education of their children had been growing, and had taken deeper root than even they guessed. Together the parents often talked over the means of attaining this end, and were finally helped in the solution of the perplexing question by a casual written suggestion. Acting upon this they decided that on each child's tenth birthday to present it with a cow, the sole profits from which, as well as the increase, should form a "college fund." This the parents hoped would not only give the children themselves an interest in the matter, but by the time they needed it, furnish means for an education.

They and the Newcombs were still friends, but the growing dissimilar tastes of the two families were evident.

From the first, William Newcomb had been consumed by a desire to get on in the world; to this he bent all his energies. At first, he liked to talk over with his young wife the affairs of the mill; but she

laughingly informed him, "It was too dreadfully prosy;" besides, she had no "head" for business, but would he not admire this delicate bit of her own embroidery she was fashioning for Therese or Marie? Left to himself he grew to live in a restless, rushing manner, borne down by the pressure of increasing business. He came hurriedly to his meals, and when he came home at night, often, the family had retired. Unconsciously he grew away from them, and they from him. Margaret, too, had begun to find life a hurried matter; for the social honor and homage paid to the wife of a wealthy—and rapidly growing more so—business man grew very sweet, and society thrust upon her a hundred new duties. The great parlors became the social center of Burrtonville, and many gay companies gathered there; for as a hostess she had rare charms. Besides, she was really a loving mother, with great pride in her beautiful children, and no hands could fashion so well the dainty apparel as her own.

What of their Church relationship during all these years? From the first each, and especially Margaret, had been critical of the fervid western style, and this feeling had grown with the years. Had they but kept themselves in touch and sympathy, as did the Stevensons, with the great re-

ligious world outside, they would have recognized this with which they were connected as but a unit in the great whole, and so had patience with local peculiarities and failings; but this they failed to do, and so during the years gave less and less of their sympathy, and drew more and more within themselves. Yet each Sabbath found them sitting decorously in their pew. They gave of their means for the support of the Church; but as to a self-denying sacrifice to carry forward the work, not one in all the company of worshipers would have expected it. So had they found their place.

But we have tarried too long with the elders. Let us turn to the children, for with these our interest centers.

Richard Newcomb was singularly like his mother in appearance, with the same beautiful eyes and mobile mouth, and a sunny, happy disposition that made him the joy of the home. From the time he could barely toddle, his greatest delight had been to visit at the hospitable home of "Aunt Rachel." As he grew older, on such visits every nook and corner of the farm would be explored, to say nothing of the great roomy cupboard with its possibilities, or the cool milkhouse with its jars of rich cream.

Asbury Stevenson was of his own age, supple,

strong, and well built, and shy upon the surface. Between the boys there was that indescribable difference that marks the boy reared in the country from him familiar with town or city. Was there no other difference? Time will tell. These boys were good friends; but it was Louise, Asbury's sister and junior by two years, who was Richard's born comrade, and who accompanied him upon every exploring expedition, no matter how perilous. She was a plump little maiden, with brown hair that rippled back from her forehead, good eyes, and a sunny, cheery face. Yet if she, in her plain gingham slip in which her busy mother dressed her, had stood for a moment by the side of dainty Marie Newcomb in her garniture of frills and embroidery, not many would have called her beautiful.

But her mother knew a strong soul was locked up in the little breast.

From the first, Louise became the constant playmate of her brothers. Did they climb the loft to search for the hidden nest of Old Speckle? Louise could spring as nimbly up the ladder as they. Did they play at tops? Louise could make them spin as well as the most expert. She soon mastered the mysteries of "mumble-peg." As for marbles, her shot was as unerring as theirs. A tomboy? Well, perhaps she was. Yet mother was beginning to de-

pend more and more upon the swift feet that almost flew upon her errands, and her marvelously sweet, low lullaby often soothed the younger ones.

As has been said, she and Richard were born comrades. When he was but six and she four, they played at housekeeping with all the dignity of elders. In childish disputes, as whether the "house" should be under the old apple-tree or the great elm, Louise's strong will usually won. Sometimes this capricious little girl was well pleased at the result. Again she would say, "What did you give up for?" "Because I had to," retorted Richard.

"May be if I was a boy I'd give up every time!" Louise would rejoin contemptuously.

Asbury was from the first a quiet, studious boy, and loved nothing so well as to hear his mother read, or, as he grew older, read for himself. Besides him and Louise, four other children had come to bless the home: Ruth, a quiet little girl of ten; Edward and John, two sturdy, strong, sinewy little fellows still younger; and baby Rose, not yet a year old, who, accepting the logic of events as any healthy baby in a large family soon learns to do, lay in her crib, crowing at a fleck of sunshine that filtered in through the little window, or with a strangely serious air studied a set of pink toes which insisted upon discarding socks—a happy, healthy

baby, requiring and receiving no care beyond its natural wants. Rachel had begun to show the effects of these years of toil and anxious motherhood; yet such was her executive ability that the domestic machinery moved with less jar than in many less well-ordered homes of smaller family; for each child had its appointed tasks, which were performed without question.

Therefore by means of method there was time, not only for the demands of the Church, but for the evening with books as well.

* * * * *

Having now noted the changes wrought by the years, and the influences that are at work to mold the children that gather about each hearthstone, we again leave them for a little space, knowing that the harvest of seed-sowing is rapidly ripening, and the inevitable reaping must quickly begin.

## V

## Character Study

IT was a bright, sunshiny morning in May, 1861, eighteen years from that other May-day, when the two brides had gone out from the village church. In order properly to celebrate the anniversary of the event, the hospitable farmhouse opened its doors to their old-time friends of the city. So it came about that the two families gathered together around the heavily-laden board.

How the great, long table groaned under its steaming and tempting burdens! How, after the meal, the children, the younger ones at least, raced and romped over the farm!

The two older of each family were at school in the academy; but these were out to-day, ostensibly to do honor to the event of long ago. But it may be questioned if any event of the past could possibly take precedence of or be more than merely a background for the present bliss of a jolly day together on the farm—"the farm," which, to the Newcomb boys and girls, stood for everything most to be desired.

We may as well pause here and explain that the "academy" was an institution in which the people of Burrtonville were beginning to take a just pride, and which they owed to the far-seeing intelligence of the very early settlers. It had grown with the growth of the town, until now it had begun to attract the young people of the country and neighboring towns.

Asbury and Richard at seventeen, and Louise and Marie, at fifteen, have outgrown the old-time scramble down the haystacks, and, instead of the old play at "housekeeping" under the apple-tree, there is the great swing; and just far enough away for a delightful ramble, is the shady woodland, just now charming with its wealth of spring violets, buttercups, Jack-in-the-pulpits, and Sweet Williams.

"Let us go to the woods," exclaim the young people; and a little later we find them searching among the gnarled and outlying roots for the "spring beauties" that nestle there; and we who are watching them observe that it is Richard who gathers the choicest of these, and Richard who shyly gives them to the cheery-faced, light-hearted girl, whose voice, as she has walked by his side on the tramp, has gayly caroled snatches of song, as sweet as that of the thrush on the bough overhead.

Nor could the elders remain indoors, and little

wonder; for what seems more like a creation fresh from the hand of God than does well-kept meadows, green hillsides, and fields of growing grain, after spring breezes have blown over them? So, at least, thought the man of business, as he bared his brow and drank in the quiet rural beauty. Something akin to regret crossed his mind at the contrast between this and the rush and hurry of his own life. But no; he could never be content with the slow, plodding life of the farm.

As these two walked, Rachel and Margaret lingered in the cozy sitting-room for reminiscences of other days. But each was too busy a woman to dwell long in the past. The growing interests of their homes and children had pushed the past farther and farther back. Not that dear old Lynton was forgotten. It still remained as the dearest and most beautiful picture silhouetted forever upon memory. The members of each home circle were yet borne in mind and loved, and at times yearned for; but to each woman had come a very busy life. Each hour brought new duties, and sometimes grave decisions. Just now they are discussing with interest a question about which there is evidently a disagreement.

"No, I can not consent." It is the clear, firm voice of Rachel that speaks.

"And why not? What possible harm?" And there is a shade of annoyance in Margaret's tones.

They are discussing a dancing-school which has lately been opened, in which Mrs. Newcomb has placed, not only Richard and Marie, but little Therese as well, and she is urging Rachel to do the same with at least her older children.

"Much possible harm every way, as I see it," rejoined Rachel. "But, Margaret, we have gone over this question, in some shape, so many times together, it is hardly worth while to reopen it. I accord you the right to make your own decisions, to take what I conceive to be your own risks; for I believe them to be risks. You must allow me the same freedom of choice." Yet Margaret continued: "You know I do not favor more than you the public ball; but for your children and mine, and perhaps other neighbors' children, to dance together in my home or yours is as innocent—as—as to swing together," she concluded, as her eye fell upon the creaking swing just outside.

"If children went no further than their parents intended, Margaret," Rachel calmly answered, "your argument would hold good. But do you remember Hazel Run, at Lynton, which began in a clump of hazels on your father's farm, but later on dashed a noisy cataract over the cliffs in Rocky

Hollow? How can you know but that, when your children are older, and the world bids for them, as it will, remembering that dancing and card-playing bore the stamp of home approval, they may leave your harmless, marked-out, home restraints as surely as Hazel Run left its quiet beginnings? Besides," she continued, "if there were no other reason, the Church—by that I mean every orthodox Church—has either prohibited such amusements or labeled them 'questionable.'"

"The Church!" Margaret interrupted vehemently. "Such restrictions are obsolete. O true daughter of Jacob Ewing," she continued, half-whimsically, "will you never open your eyes to see that even Church sentiment changes? Dr. Herron's children attend this *questionable* school, so do Judge Gibson's; and how could the Church meet its financial obligations without the aid of these?"

"It is not for me to judge," responded Margaret; "but I can reason from results. Has it been your observation that children brought up under the influence of such lax, easy-going practices develop that principle of self-sacrifice upon which the Church of the past has rested? Is it from such homes that the ranks of the ministry are recruited; that missionaries, ready to sacrifice life if need be, go out? True, they may own a sort of Churchly

allegiance, and may even contribute to its support, realizing, as even the dullest must, that that civilization which is the boast of our century is the offspring of Christian teaching."

Here the discussion was cut short by the return of the husbands. These had lingered to discuss the site of the new house. The stone for the foundation was already on the ground, and as soon as the crops were laid by, it was expected that the building would begin.

As they lingered they had also talked earnestly of the gathering war-cloud, now about bursting over the land. Like an electric-shock, but a few weeks before, pale lips had passed on the sentence, "Sumter has fallen!" Even as these two old friends talked, there came the awakening strains of drum and fife, and close behind, as if by magic, an army was springing from workshop and farm.

The very first blast of the tocsin had been strangely thrilling to John Stevenson. But yesterday there had been a mammoth "pole-raising." He had been the one to float to the breeze at Burrtonville a bright new flag; and not one in the crowd would have guessed that the still, quiet man, who so steadily adjusted the bit of cloth, was longing to snatch it and rush to the front of the battle.

But no such wild thoughts disturbed the mind

of Burrtonville's confessedly most astute financier, William Newcomb. With the rapidity and certainty of a carefully-trained accountant, his mind at once grasped the financial situation. There would be armies to feed; for this the Government must buy grain. The calling off of men from their regular pursuits would disturb the question of supplies. "This conflict that is just on will last longer than these poor fellows who are enlisting for sixty days dream of. Now," he continued to reason, "if I can buy up grain in these early months, and hold it for the enormous demand and high prices that are bound to come later, then—" the pleased, far-away smile told how gratifying was the anticipation. Through such different glasses did these two men, walking side by side, view what appeared the death-struggle of their country!

But to carry out this plan, William Newcomb knew that ready money was a necessity, and, as often happens, his own available assets were already "tied up" in other investments. "Now, if only these beautiful acres were mine," he thought, covetously—a suggestion came! Bending over, he asked a question of the farmer, a question which brought surprise and a measure of confusion, but to which, after a moment of thought, he replied, "Rachel and I will talk it over." Then, turning, they en-

tered the house, interrupting, as we have seen, the conversation between Rachel and Margaret. Once there, the all-absorbing "war talk" became general, and continued till the departure of the guests.

* * * * *

"Mother, I want to join that dancing-class," was the announcement Louise startled her mother with as they were busy about the evening work.

"What do you know of the dancing-class?" asked her mother, in order to gain a little time.

Then followed a description of it and its advantages, painted in the most glowing colors. But Louise did not say to her mother—perhaps she was not herself conscious of it—that that which lent a roseate hue to the whole was, that Richard had paused for a moment, as he was leaving to say: "Be sure to coax your mother to let you go. *I want you!*"

"And, mother, Mildred Gibson and Will Herron are going; and you know they are in my Sunday-school class."

"And my daughter wants to do something because some one else does?" interpolated her mother.

Then, tenderly, lovingly, this mother went over with her daughter the reasons why she could not grant her wish.

It was not easy for Louise to yield. Besides a good, strong, healthy will of her own that struggled for supremacy, there was a healthy body and an exuberant flow of spirits, that readily responded to what promised a genuine good time. But it was at this juncture that the *habit* of obedience bore its fruit. Louise had been accustomed to yield her will and trust to the judgment of her mother, and although it was hard, from her angle of fifteen years, yet habit prevailed.

* * * * *

The conversations of the day show in what directions the young people of the two families are started. Both are communicants at the same altar, yet with what different feelings are they taught to regard the obligations imposed. In one, the restrictions are considered irksome, to be ignored or condemned as foolish and exacting. In the other family, these same are shown, by the tender voice of the mother and the no less kindly counsel of the father, to be at least safe, and in the end helpful. In the one, self-gratification has been restrained from the cradle, and the happiness of living for others enforced by precept and example. In the other, a want was but to be made known to be gratified, if possible.

But outside of the parents themselves, there was yet another molding influence at work. In the Newcomb home there was an elegant library, whose carved bookcases were filled with handsomely-bound books—really a good selection. There were books of travel, books of poetry, some cumbrous volumes of history; but they stood up so prim and regular, with altogether such a well-kept air, one knew at once that they were unread, unloved. No; the Newcombs were not a reading family; that is, there was no regularity in their habits—to long for a certain book; to obtain it at last; to read it aloud, with appreciative listeners; to come across a choice passage that thrilled one with its beauty and truth, as it is not given to even a Klondike nugget to thrill. Of all this they knew nothing. Perhaps because all this implies a certain amount of leisure, an unknown factor in the city home; for business was coming to claim the father, even of evenings, and society the mother. Indeed, with the years, each child came to have its "engagements," so that few evenings found the family at home.

But they did read! Ask Marie, ask Therese. Stored away in their drawers, taken to bed even with them, were novels of the most sensational type, which the girls devoured rather than read. Alas for the blindness! Alas for the hurry! The

pity of it is, that at this formative period in these young lives there had not been one, with the inclination and leisure, whose happiness it might have been to lead these ready minds out into the great fields of thought, where, feeding, they would have been broadened, deepened, and filled with an appreciation of higher things, and bound them, with silken fetters, to the Church of God! What sorrow might have been averted!

In that other home with which we have to do, the reader already knows that, humble as it was, books and good periodicals had, from its beginning, been a strong factor. The impress of these has already been noted in the parents. It is becoming quite as visible in the children; for, unconsciously to one's self, what one reads molds one's habits of thought; and habits of thought are the springs of action. Louise, with her gladsome, buoyant nature, would not otherwise have so readily yielded in the matter of attendance at the dancing-school. It may be her mother was human enough to ascribe this yielding wholly to her own wise counsel; but back of this, in the heart of this young girl, was a pride in, a love for, and a loyalty to the Church, which even the mother did not suspect. Some way, somehow, she had caught a glimpse of the "miracle" of the centuries; that is, the re-

sistless growth and spread of God's kingdom among men, of which that which they called the "Church" was the visible sign. In this "plan" there had been the "setting up" and setting down of kingdoms, the transcendently conspicuous work of a few individuals; but even a casual reader could note that the secret of power of this great whole had always lain in the devotion and steadiness of purpose of the individual, the unit; and, strange truth, exemplified over and over by all history, the individual, the unit, had been able to accomplish the most for itself and for the world, as it had placed itself in harmony with this "plan." "Therefore," our young friend reasoned, though she was scarcely conscious of the reasoning, "it were 'better' to be in harmony. It were 'better not,' perhaps after all, to insist one one's own desires."

* * * * *

Night had fallen upon the sunshiny anniversary. The children of the farmhouse, worn out by a day of unusual pleasure, slept soundly. But the parents lingered to talk over the events of the day, a surprising one, of which Rachel now learned, had been the confidential request of William Newcomb that, inasmuch as he desired a sum of money to invest in the immediate purchase of grain, John would become surety for the same. The idea was not

relished by either; for anything savoring of debt or obligation was peculiarly distasteful. But there was absolutely no risk; Newcomb's far-seeing business instinct had become almost a proverb.

The conversations of the day had indicated a growing estrangement—an estrangement the farm-folk did not relish. Might not this be an opportunity to indicate the real friendliness of their hearts, and thus possibly bridge over the growing chasm? "Yes, it had better be done," was the decision.

This matter settled, the conversation drifted back to the threatened war, and its probable length was discussed. Suddenly there flashed upon Rachel a realization of all the heartache involved. With her mental vision she saw the sad farewells of husbands and wives, the going out of brave young boys, who had been the joy and pride of home. Was it strange that she experienced a wave of thankfulness that her eldest was so young? Arising, she went softly to the bed where Asbury lay sleeping, and gently kissed his forehead. "No, my treasures are not demanded," she said, and was glad.

O, blind Rachel! Was there nothing to whisper aught to you of the battle waging in the faithful heart so near you? Can you not read the agony written in the eyes that just now are so anxiously watching you?

## VI

## The War—An Accident—Louise and Richard

THE next few months slipped by with startling rapidity. On the farm, heavy crops had been harvested, and lumber was ready for the new house, which John seemed strangely loth to begin. At the mill, William's prophecy had been fulfilled. The business had certainly quadrupled. Instead of the war-cloud blowing over, as many had hoped, it gathered in intensity. And in these first few months the Nation seemed in the throes of dissolution, as news of continued defeats flew northward. This became the absorbing topic—all else dropped into insignificance.

One evening in the early autumn, John Stevenson sat reading the *Daily*, which in these troublous times had suddenly grown to be a household necessity. Suddenly he threw it aside, with the remark, "Another call for volunteers." Something in his voice caught his wife's ear. In a moment she was by his side, her arms about him. "You—you—surely you do n't think—" but she could not

finish, only to gasp, "O! the children!" Gently he told of his long struggle, how duty seemed urging, nay, driving him to the front. "And what a coward! How the children, and even yourself, would have a right to blush for me if I failed my country in this supreme hour of need!" As he talked, his face lighted and glowed with the thrill of patriotism, and, with breaking heart and ready intuition, the wife perceived how useless would be a protest against his heart convictions.

For answer, she silently bowed her head upon his breast. With a lightning-like flash she saw the weary years ahead. No more sweet counsel together. Upon her alone must rest that burden. Somehow, she must take upon herself the management of the farm. And then—O, dreadful thought! —so many had marched off never to come back. They had died in battle, on the wearisome march, or of wasting disease in hospitals.

Could she stand it? Ought she to? Ah! but there was the bleeding Nation, and its strong, great-hearted President, calling for brave men!

Other women's hearts were breaking; why not hers? She lifted her head, and her husband knew her heart had said, "Aye."

A few days later, at the supper-table, William Newcomb announced, "John has enlisted." He and

his wife talked much of the unwisdom of the act; but in the heart of each there was a respect for the brave soldier which neither cared to acknowledge to the other. "His regiment is about full, and he will go to the front in another week," Newcomb added, as he left the room.

How readily we adjust ourselves to the inevitable! A week ago the sun had shone so brightly! Rachel remembered, in a dazed kind of way, that she had been so happy when Asbury had come home from the academy but a little while ago, and announced his promotion as a reward for some extra study he had been doing. Could such a small thing ever make her happy again? With hardly a sigh, the plans for the new house were given up. So does a greater grief absorb our lesser ones.

The last few days were given to the hurried preparation of some articles necessary for the comfort of the dear one. At first, the grief of the children knew no bounds. Asbury, proud in his seventeen years, begged to accompany his father; but no—the mother was firm—that sacrifice had not been demanded of her.

Louise went to bed, dreaming of hospitals, bandages, and of broken limbs. Could the mother have looked into that warm, impulsive heart, she

would have been surprised at the ambitious plans brooding there. As for Ruth, it was touching to watch her, as she silently followed her father about the house, watching an opportunity to slip her hand in his, or cuddle in his lap. They had always been peculiarly knit together, and for them the parting promised to be hard.

On the day following his enlistment, he was surprised, while at the barn, to hear childish sobs above him. With a swift, silent step, he reached the mow. There, prone on the hay, lay little Ruth. "Father, O father! we will die without you!" he heard her sob. In a moment he had gathered her to his arms, and tenderly, as though she had been older, he explained the grave needs of the hour; then added, "And my little girl may help by praying each day and night for my return." After this there were no tears; but the faithful little body followed him like a shadow.

The last week slipped by—surely, never had a week hurried so. The last morning dawned, clear, bright, beautiful. As Rachel mechanically opened the blinds, she noticed as much, and that the early frosts were scattering the leaves from the great elm. Already there seemed a pathos in the tossing of the bare limbs. "It is as well," she murmured

to herself. "Let them toss and moan, if they will, as winter's blasts fall upon them. 'T is but a type of life's emptiness."

John was to leave before noon; and before the home adieus were said, he went mechanically to the barn, ostensibly for a last word with the hired man, but in reality to take leave of the animals that for so long had been a part of his life. Black Nell, that had faithfully helped to draw the great wagon westward so long ago, was no more; but Princess, her daughter and counterpart, stood contentedly in her stall, and gave a low whinny of recognition, and rubbed her nose against the arm of her master. But time was passing, and voices on the outside were calling. John paused a moment at the stall of "Superb," a great stallion, noted alike for his strength and at times for his viciousness. Why does he chafe so? What is that about his hoof? Ah! in his pawing he has loosed a board; and see! a nail has been thrust in the hoof. To see anything wrong, with John Stevenson was but to try to remedy it; so, with a "Stand still, there, Superb," he entered the stall and stooped to adjust—

It was well that the man who was to help on the farm opened the bar-door just then; for a sharp moan went up, then all was still. A few minutes later, Rachel saw them bearing a still burden

straight to her door. Five minutes later, Black Princess was galloping rapidly to Burrtonville for medical help. John Stevenson was seriously injured, if not killed. As he lay back upon the pillows, it looked the latter. Outside the door were grouped the frightened children. Asbury had flown to Burrtonville for the doctor. Louise had grasped little Rose, and, not knowing what she did, began humming a nursery ditty. Poor Rachel, utterly stunned, with a heart that seemed suddenly to have become lead, walked first to the bed, then to the door to look anxiously down the highway towards Burrtonville.

The jaunty blue soldier's cap lay on the floor, where it had dropped from the improvised litter. Mechanically she picked it up, and there rushed in upon her a realization of what was to have been and what was.

But it was left for Ruth—timid, yet practical Ruth—to go softly to the bed, rub the cold hands and bathe the brow, till a low moan told that he yet lived.

The physician gravely shook his head. One cruel stroke of the great hoofs had broken a limb, while another had injured the spine, it could not be told how seriously. For a week the father lay between life and death, and while he so lay, the

company that was to have been his marched away. Two days before their departure, Rachel went to William Newcomb, and, handing him a roll of bills, said: "If my husband lives, he can not go. To do so was his heart's desire. Take this money—we had saved it for a new house—get two 'substitutes' in his place. The country needs them, and the log-house will do." Brave, patriotic Rachel! There were thousands like her. Can we of a younger generation ever appreciate the sacrifices of those terrible days?

* * * * *

It was found that John Stevenson would not die. He would live but for a time, at best, an invalid.

While he is being nursed back to health, we must again look in upon the young people, and another visit to the Newcomb home becomes necessary.

It has been seen that the older ones of each family were in the academy. But teachers and parents found it hard to hold the young mind down to study. Outside was the roll of drums, and "news from the front" was the all-absorbing topic. In all this, as a matter of course, the boys became intensely interested. In every village, town, and

hamlet, "companies" were formed, a captain chosen, and the "common" became a drill-ground, where youthful patriotism huzzaed itself hoarse. Burrtonville had its company, and, after its marches and countermarches, usually, its young captain would be led to a goods-box, from which, with youthful fervor, he would orate upon the day's struggle. This captain was Richard Newcomb, who seemed born for leadership. Hearing the huzza, even the busy William Newcomb would smile; for his "dream" lay in his handsome, boyish-faced Richard. The late investments of this man of business had surprised even himself by their quick returns; but he found fortune a stern mistress. He must make no reservations if he would serve her. When his soul rebelled at the bonds, he would comfort himself, saying: "The strain will soon be over. I shall have amassed a great fortune, and then—." His wife, always a doting mother, as she perceived Richard and Marie slipping into manhood and womanhood, determined that they should have every advantage which the money and social prestige, which were theirs, could procure.

The young people of Burrtonville had learned to love the great, roomy parlor and spacious dining-room beyond; for in them charming evenings

had been spent—now in the "harmless" parlor dance, now at the low whist-tables. Both Richard and Marie had become skillful players at the last. When the proper hour would arrive, Margaret, the gracious hostess, and Marie, daintily gowned, would serve the refreshments.

The Newcombs' grounds boasted many trellises of the choicest grapes, and, under the supervision of the mistress herself, each year, casks of home-made wines were stored in the cellar, which were drawn upon for these same refreshments; and usually it was Marie's own hand that poured the rich liquid. Yes, what with music, dancing, cards, and wine, the evenings did pass gayly.

It is true, some parents shook their heads; but then, "the Newcombs were so eminently respectable, and besides, Church members." Moreover, as a society leader, Mrs. Newcomb was often heard to express her strong disapproval of public dances; only could they be allowed in the parlors of home or friends. When one suggested that "cards" belonged by right to the saloon or brothel, her reply was, "Boys had better learn at home, so there would be no temptation to assail them when they were out in the world." "As for wine," here her lip would curl contemptuously, "as if one could not control their appetite! It would be a

weak person indeed who could not sip a glass of home-made wine without becoming a drunkard." Yet even now, could she have caught the whisper, it was beginning to be said outside the home, that the handsome son of this handsome woman, who felt so sure of the correctness of her views, was already becoming too fond of his cups.

Margaret Newcomb prided herself upon the fact that she was "progressive." It was a favorite saying of hers that "we ought not to try to hold our young people down to the notions of half a century ago; and as for the Church!—well, if the Church would hold its young people, let it modernize."

It was strange that among the molding influences that shaped this family, the contents of the handsomely-carved bookcase did not exert a greater influence. Strange, too, that among all the elegantly-bound books there was such an utter absence of any specifically religious. No, not strange, if we recall the elder Richard Allen and his seed-sowing, and the truth that the harvest is greater than the sowing.

But among the young people of Burrtonville there was one family whose young people had no part in these social evenings at the Newcomb's. We say "young people of Burrtonville," for though

the Stevenson farm lay two miles distant, yet so closely were the inmates associated with the Church and school—indeed, with all the interests of the town—that for all practical purposes they were a part of it.

From the anniversary-day, when Rachel Stevenson had so clearly expressed her convictions, it had been understood that, while at other times the Stevenson boys and girls were glad to be at "Aunt Margaret's," on these social evenings they would be absent. We should not be a true chronicler if we were to say that this entailed no hardship upon these wide-awake, fun-loving young people, or that there never were any questionings, nor hints at rebellion; but we can say, that when a victory has been once gained (as had been), subsequent ones become easier; for a successful life, after all, is made up of many small victories, rather than one or two great ones. But upon Richard, accustomed to have his own way, this decision fell the hardest; for from the days when he and Louise had played at housekeeping beneath the elms, she had been his comrade, his boyish ideal, nor had dawning manhood changed this, and to be thus peremptorily deprived of his old-time playmate in his social life was unendurable.

But Mrs. Stevenson remained firm; so, while the Newcombs danced in their lovely parlors, making the evenings gay with laughter and song, Louise, Asbury, and Ruth took turns in reading aloud to their invalid father, or studied the lessons for the morrow.

## VII

# Academy Life, and Home Evenings

THESE were months of anxiety and care to the Stevensons.

Let us go back to the day when the father was carried in so cruelly injured. The broken limb easily healed; but excruciating pain revealed the fact that a serious injury to the back had occurred, and it was months before it was known whether he would again walk. Twice came the sowing, and twice the reaping, before he crept forth upon his staff, in appearance an old man.

During the first few months of his invalidism, Rachel suddenly found herself face to face with several problems which, unlike previous ones that had arisen, could not be settled by mutual counsel. One was the question of the farm management; another, involved in the first, was, should Asbury and Louise remain in the academy? Each was strong and well-built. Would it not be wise to have their help at home during this emergency? While others slept, she, wide awake, viewed these questions on each side.

"No," she finally said, "they must remain in school at all hazards." So the trusty farm-hand, who was to have staid during her husband's absence, was retained. The younger boys were now sturdy lads, and these, with Ruth, became now, more than ever, their mother's helpers, remaining at home during the first winter, reserving, though, a part of the time for study and recitation, either to Asbury or Louise. This was a necessity; for the invalid required the constant care of his wife.

Outside the school hours, Asbury and Louise lent willing hands; but they were each near the final year of the course, and their studies required much time. Besides, it was her father's wish that Louise should devote as much time as was possible to her music. Her voice was a rich soprano. Each month appeared to add clearness, strength, and volume to it—so said her teachers; but there was about it an indescribable touch of pathos which touched the hearts of those who heard her sing.

Richard Newcomb, it may be said, sang too—a deep, musical tenor—and sometimes, as these well-chorded voices rang out together, as they now often did, from the plain little sitting-room, a curious fear smote Rachel's heart; but she brushed it aside. "They are but children, and have played

together from the cradle." Still, unconsciously, she found herself paraphrasing Rebekah's old lament, "What sorrow to my soul, if my daughter take a husband of the sons of Heth!"

So, with work and with not a few anxieties, the days of John Stevenson's invalidism went by.

"Rachel," said he one day, while he was yet in bed, "the time for that note to be paid, for which I became security, has passed. Has Newcomb mentioned the matter lately?"

"No; but I must go in to Burrtonville this afternoon, and will see him."

An hour later she was interviewing the rich owner of not only the most prosperous mills in all Western Illinois, but the largest dealer in real estate as well.

Now, while the investment for which Newcomb had borrowed the money had proven successful, still there had come so many wonderful openings, the sum had been reinvested again and again. Just now it was out; but next week it would lie in the bank, and a stroke of the pen would cancel the note. This much he explained to Rachel.

"But I would rather it was paid," said John, when the message was given to him. "Go to him again, and say I can not allow my name to remain longer."

Surely, his long confinement was telling on his nerves. Still, the message was taken. William Newcomb bowed in acquiescence, and said, "It shall be as he said." And both John and Rachel felt a relief that it was "settled."

During the last winter of the convalescence, an event occurred which, on account of its bearing upon the two families, must not fail of being chronicled. A great religious awakening occurred. Beginning in the church where our friends worshiped, it spread throughout the city. Its effects were particulary noticeable in the academy, nearly the entire school being converted.

With the Stevensons, each child had in its infancy been presented for baptism; and later on, after careful instructions in Church doctrines and usages, had been received into full membership in accordance with the plan of their Church. To neither of these children had it occurred that anything further was necessary. Yet, again and again, came the reiterated message from the lips of the earnest preacher, "Ye must be born again," followed by the strange altar scenes, where, amid tears, prayers, and songs, a face would suddenly brighten, and glowing with a strange light, would exclaim, "It is finished!"

Louise had never doubted that she was a

child of God, as indeed she was, yet she was the first among her brothers and sisters to feel the need of something which as yet she had not possessed; and in her own impulsive way, without a word to the home-folks, she knelt at the altar, where she poured out her young soul in prayer. Presently a strange peace stole into her heart. She remained yet a little while upon her knees, then arose, with the joy born of the consciousness of Christ's Spirit within illuminating her face.

O, young, impulsive, warm-hearted Louise! Could you have seen the weary years and heart-aches ahead, the heavy trials that await you, the work He has for you, you might perhaps have lingered even longer, to pray that through it all this new-found joy and peace might always be yours!

It was a matter of comment between the father and mother during these meetings that Asbury took little or no interest in them. For awhile he had been regular in his attendance, but finally contrived to stay away upon one pretext or another. One night, after the family had come home from church and had fallen asleep, Rachel was awakened by a noise in the little bedroom where Asbury slept, and a voice calling, "Father, mother, come here!" Each hastened with a fear of sudden ill-

ness. What was their surprise to find Asbury up and dressed, and in tears, and to be met with the exclamation, "I must have this question of 'salvation' settled now."

With tender and tactful inquiries, both parents sought to find the difficulty. Born, baptized, and brought up in the Church, taking a delight in her worship, well-read in her literature, grounded in her doctrines,—still there was a hungering in the soul, a burden on the heart. The hortatory style of the preacher had aroused a conviction of personal unworthiness. For weeks the burden had grown heavier, till now it was unbearable. Fortunately, from earliest childhood, religious talks between children and parents had been common; so there was none of that shrinking timidity which at such times frequently drives the seeker to some other than the family. Grasping the situation at once, the father got his Bible, and both he and the mother began to point out the Scriptures, making plain the wondrous plan of salvation, showing, however exemplary the life, there yet remained necessary the individual surrender of self, and the acceptance of a personal Savior.

Suddenly there came an illumination of the mind. The wondrous simplicity of it all dawned upon the struggling youth, and while his mother's

voice was yet petitioning the Throne, he exclaimed "I see it all!

> 'The great transaction 's done;
> I am the Lord's and He is mine.'"

And now it was John and Rachel Stevenson's turn to be surprised. Could this be their quiet and reticent boy, who, with beaming face, was shouting aloud, praising God, till the brown old rafters fairly shook with the echo?

Old-fashioned? Yes, perhaps; but it was that blessed "old-fashion" that, throughout the ages, has made the Church strong and stalwart; that has implanted and nourished such clear conviction of right and wrong; that, at a word, armies have sprung into existence to do battle for the right! The same "old-fashion" that has sent pioneer preachers and teachers to the western wilds till, to-day, they blossom as the rose, has sent out missionaries till, from heathen lands to-day, is wafted news of a nation being born in a day; and, quite as necessary as any of those "greater" results, has planted in every Church, no matter how humble, those who cheerfully become the "burden-bearers," and in their daily lives exemplify the Master's power to save.

During the remaining weeks of the meeting,

none were more faithful, none more earnest, and none quite so successful as a personal worker as the erstwhile timid Asbury Stevenson.

Nor were the Newcombs left unmoved. With the religious feeling as intense as it was, it could not have been otherwise.

Asbury's conversion was hardly less a source of joy to the Stevensons than was Richard Newcomb's. Indeed, Rachel seemed to rejoice more than his mother, who said, carelessly, "Certainly, I expected that the children, as they grew older, would identify themselves more closely with the Church. Religion is right and proper. It is the 'extremes' that are disagreeable."

A word about Richard Newcomb and his mother. It is one of the strange things which we meet with in life that a mother frequently allows herself to become absolutely blinded as to her children's morals and habits. Now that Richard was nearing manhood, his mother did not appear to realize that for her son the old home-evenings had lost their charm, and more and more, upon one pretext and another, he was coming to spend these evenings outside of the family circle. At first, he made a feint of going to his father's office; but there was little to interest him there, as he knew nothing of the business. Besides, in the

last few months, his father was growing nervous and irascible, and to wear a haggard and worn look, and seemed ready to find fault, upon little or no provocation, with his pleasure-loving son. Yet if home was tiresome, the office atmosphere unpleasant, he did not need to seek far for hearty good-fellowship.

Burrtonville had changed much since the old days of log-houses and stumpy streets. It had already begun to ape metropolitan airs in many ways, and also to reproduce city vices with startling exactness.

So, in the brilliantly-lighted rooms, where the clink of glasses was often heard, together with the coarse laugh and jest, and the steady click of the billiard balls, Richard, at first, occasionally dropped in for an "evening." The "occasions" became frequent, till, at the date of which we speak, he was scarcely ever at home; and worse, Marie, whose rooms adjoined his, knew that at times he came home staggering, maudlin. Was this all unknown to the mother? No one knew. If so, pride kept her silent; but it is more likely that faith in the devil's choicest saying, "Let him alone; he must sow his wild oats," formed a large part of her creed at this juncture.

Yet, if his mother kept sealed lips, Dame

Rumor did not, and it became current among his acquaintances that "Young Newcomb was going to the bad." Bits of this rumor could not fail to reach the Stevenson home, where it appeared to carry more dismay than to his own home.

Louise, with the old, imperious stamp of her foot, declared it all false, a shameless specimen of gossip. She had known Richard always, and knew the kindliness and honor of his soul, the loftiness of his ideals. That he should fall below these, degrade himself by becoming a common drunkard—her loyal heart spurned the thought! So Rachel carried a double burden: Real sorrow over the misdeeds of one who had grown up as her own—misdeeds in which she was compelled to believe; and an awakening misgiving concerning that one of hers who was so ready to defend the sinner. Therefore it was with extreme satisfaction that she and hers beheld the zeal, and watched the glow and fervor of Richard Newcomb in these days of his early Christian life. They had yet to learn, as do we all, that while grace does much for a soul, it can not take the place of careful training and settled Christian principle, and that the modern Christian sower finds, as did the one in Galilee, that not a little of his work withers away in the heat of every-day temptation.

## VIII

## Asbury's Decision—The Newcombs

EIGHTEEN hundred and sixty-five! What memories are yet evoked in the hearts of many by the bare mention of this date!

During all these years, since John Stevenson's company had marched away without him, the great, bloody conflict had been waging. The Nation had lived at fever-heat. The ordinary affairs of life were forgotten in the excitement of "news from the front." Slowly, though, within the last few months, the war-cloud had been lifting. Rumors of peace were afloat. Finally came the news of Lee's surrender, and soon the steady tramp of thousands of returning brave men shook the streets of cities and aroused country hamlets.

How the lusty cheers went up from many throats as groups of bronzed veterans came marching down the streets! Usually the fleet telegraph had announced their coming; then a proud and happy citizenship welcomed them with the wildest enthusiasm. Alas! that in the midst of this joy, grief had a right to intrude! Amid the joyous,

welcoming crowd there were many black-robed figures, who wept because not all who had so bravely marched away were among the returning ones.

At such times, Rachel Stevenson's heart ached for her husband; for the pallor of his face and the tightening of the lips told how great the trial of invalidism instead of active service had been.

We have seen that the Stevensons were patriotic; therefore they were intensely interested in the close of the war. Still, this interest could not wholly overshadow the events which were occurring in their own family—events of great moment, both for the present, and for the years to come. In June, Asbury was to be graduated from the academy. It had been hard, during the closing years, to hold him down to study. Once, when a specially urgent "call" for troops was made, he insisted upon going. To this his mother emphatically said: "No; you are too young for efficient service;" adding, "There are as truly great battle-fields ahead. God would have you prepare yourself, that he may use you where he will."

As his graduation drew near, he and his parents were, each in their way, giving much thought to his immediate future. It soon became known to the "home-folks" that Asbury was carrying a

"burden" which he had not yet shared with the family.

Like many another mother, Mrs. Stevenson had found that there is an age when it is not wise to follow a boy or question him too closely. Besides, this son of hers had inherited from his father a trait which made him more difficult of access; that is, concerning that which he felt most, he said least.

Therefore, she felt that at this juncture he would be stronger if some questions were settled without word of hers.

It was a source of comfortable thought to know that the "college fund," dating back to the plan of the gift of the cows, when each child in the family came to the age of ten years, had now grown until there was on deposit sufficient to give each two or three years at a university. That much assured, somehow the rest would come.

But to return to Asbury. One day, about a month before his graduation, he surprised his mother by coming home during school-hours.

"Why, how does it happen that you are home at this hour? Are you sick?" was the natural query. "No;" and vouchsafing no further reply, he passed into his room remaining there till called for the evening meal. Later, at evening prayer,

after a bit of natural hesitation, he said, "Now we are all together, I want to tell you that it is settled." "What is settled?" came in chorus from his brothers and sisters. But his mother, who had watched his struggle with an anxiety all unknown to him, arose, and, putting her arms about him, said, "That you are to preach the gospel, is it not?" For answer came a tightening of the hand-clasp, tears fell from his eyes, and his head bowed assent.

Yes; from the memorable night of his conversion, he had carried about with him, as he told them, the constantly-increasing burden, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." Now he had rolled it off in unquestioning obedience.

How quickly affairs adjust themselves to suit new conditions! Within a week after Asbury's decision, it had been determined that, after a summer spent in helping on the farm, he should enroll as a student at a university in another State. This university, in addition to its excellent theological course, had a comprehensive and thorough course, open alike to young women as well as young men. After much consultation, it was further decided that Louise should forego her last year in the academy and accompany him, an arrangement in which the young lady cheerfully

acquiesced, but hardly with the enthusiasm her parents would have been glad to have seen displayed.

* * * * *

This being an interwoven history, we must now return to Richard Newcomb, with whom we have not had to do since his conversion, three years ago.

During all this time his life had been exemplary. But who can estimate the force of habit, or thwart the power of molding influences upon childhood? One of the greatest hindrances which he and his sisters encountered in their efforts to live Christian lives was a lack (unconscious perhaps, yet none the less truly a lack) of reverence for the Church and respect for its teachings. This was wholly the result of their bringing up. During their entire life they heard criticisms concerning it, and had heard its requirements scoffed at and seen them disregarded. Besides, though not one member of this proud and cultured family would have been willing to acknowledge it, they were really all wofully ignorant in regard to this one matter. The glorious past of the Church, with its splendid line of achievements, was utterly unknown. To them, the organization at Burrtonville was the Church. If one of the good deacons

deviated from the strait and narrow path, or if his wife were shrewish and took an undue interest in her neighbors' affairs, this at once became an argument against the Church. If at times certain of the members displayed more zeal than culture, these æsthetic young people smiled, in a patronizing way, and gave "the Church" a discredit mark.

With the well-read young people of the farm it was otherwise. They knew that, back of these, was a long line of illustrious scholars, poets, and statesmen—indeed, almost the entire scholarship of the world—who had been proud to give their allegiance to this same Church.

As for its current history, the Newcombs knew less of it than of the most trivial political affair in their own land, or indeed of the nations of the earth. It could not be otherwise; for the books upon the library shelves covered almost every field except that of religion. The magazines, which monthly loaded their reading-table, were rich in serials, portraying life, whether among the great or lowly, picturing its loves and hates with skillful touch; but of the Church they were silent, save as, perhaps, some one of its philanthropies touched the world.

Looking back to the weeks when these young

people started, in a deeper sense, to live a Christian life, it seems strange that it did not occur to either this father or mother that their children needed now, particularly at this crucial time, a helpful Christian literature. Mr. Newcomb could not have imagined himself living without his favorite political paper; Mrs. Newcomb had her own specialities in the newspaper and magazine world. But that there was needed, as a factor in the family life, a paper devoted to the Church, giving its current events and discussing its questions of interest, was not thought of or considered.

There was yet another hindrance that made a Christian life hard, and that was the habits of these young people. Their feet were nimble in the dance, and their hands were skillful with cards. They loved the taste of their mother's rich wines, and had been taught to believe this right. It is little wonder that, erelong, Marie and Therese, though retaining a nominal membership, relapsed into the old way.

What of Richard, "handsome Richard," as his mother fondly called him? Is he able to stand where others fell? To answer this question will be one of the provinces of the following pages of this "home story." We have seen that since his conversion his life has been exemplary. His was

really a noble nature, and his heart was full of lofty ideals. Nature had, indeed, richly endowed him. He was a "born comrade;" for added to his fine physique was a hearty, genial manner that drew all hearts to him.

He and Asbury Stevenson were classmates, and it was plain, even to Rachel, that where Asbury plodded, Richard easily soared, so graciously did knowledge unfold herself to him. We have seen him, during his boyhood, as the boyish orator, firing the hearts of his "military company." We see him now, in the closing years of his academic life, the easily-recognized leader in all debate. Nor were there any better informed than he upon the great questions that were just then threatening to rend the nation in twain.

One of the great events of his boyhood had been a debate, held in his native town, between the two great sons of Illinois, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas. He was captivated by the sturdy common sense, keen wit, and irresistible logic of Lincoln. He followed the speaker's every movement, and edged his way, through the great, huzzaing crowd, quite to the speaker's side; and no gray head watched with more interest the flash of the kindling eye, or noted more accurately the deep conviction which lighted up the plain, rugged

features. From that hour the political questions of the day were of supreme interest to him.

Little wonder that, as his academic life drew to its close, many predicted a brilliant future for this favorite. Remembering the time, not so long in the past, when this same loved student had been anything but studious, and when rumor had been rife with his name, many said, "What a reformation!" Such did not know, neither did keen-eyed Rachel suspect, that, stronger than the attractive, beckoning finger of future usefulness and fame, stronger even than his love to God, was the growing and deepening love between himself and Louise, and that this was the slender, silken cord which was drawing him away from the evil into a sincere desire for the good.

## IX

# A Love Affair, and a Mother's View of It

DIMLY the old brick walls of Burrtonville Academy loomed up that June evening in the dusky shadow of the moon. The trees in the campus were laden with their heaviest foliage, and the drooping branches cast shadowy outlines upon the winding walks, over which little groups of students, mostly in twos, sauntered in the moonlight. It was Commencement-week, and the evening of the college social. The walk led up quite near to the building, where it divided, leading up to the two entrances, leaving a triangular bit of ground, filled with the choicest flowers. Just now the air was heavy with the rich wealth and fragrance of masses of June roses. Among the shadows, on the great stone steps, sat a young girl and her companion. In her lap lay a cluster of roses she had gathered in passing, the petals of which she aimlessly scattered, as the low, earnest tones of her companion fell in sweet cadence upon her ears.

It is the old, yet ever new, sweet story, which shall never lose its freshness till the last son and daughter of Adam have quitted this earth.

"Listen, Louise—." Ah! it is Richard, eloquent, love-stirred Richard, who is speaking.

"You must hear me, for this may be our last opportunity together; for I am sure your going to college is but a plan to separate us. I know too well I am not a favorite in your home. How can I be, when our family notions of life are so different!" And then, with all the hot, impassioned fervor of youth, he pleaded his love, and for the sweet promise that should indissolubly link their lives together.

Little need, Richard, had you but known it, for all this eloquence. The treasure you seek is yours. The link you ask for has been forging through the long, happy hours of childhood. The opening years of young manhood and young womanhood have strengthened it. Indeed, who shall say that in the great councils of your creation and hers it was not said, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder?"

As his words died away, a little hand crept shyly into his. The June breezes murmured softly around the stern old walls. The flowers, but a step away, lightly touched their heads together as

if in knowledge of the sweet secret, but the young pair were silent; for vain are words to voice the tumult of a soul.

They could linger but a little while; for during the evening Louise was to sing. Poor Louise! How could she face the audience? Surely her precious secret must be read by every one, and it was in a strange, bewildering maze of happiness with which, presently, she joined with Richard in the long promenade of the hall. And Richard, happy, audacious Richard; more than once he looked down into the bright face at his side and boldly whispered, "My darling!"

Once on this promenade they passed Rachel, who sat chatting with some friends. Something in the air of the couple suddenly arrested her attention, and sent a momentary pang to her heart. "They are but children," she said to herself. "Louise will forget all this in the coming year at school." Presently the rich voice of her daughter rang out in song. The selection was a light, joyous one, and surely never did lark or linnet, on swaying bough, warble so joyously, nor did ever an upturned, feathered throat anywhere so surely sing of joy and peace.

Rachel listened in wonder, as did the audience; but no voice whispered to her soul of the new ex-

perience of her daughter. How strange that we are so slow to read the hearts of our own!

This mother had watched this young girl grow from her own arms—first, into the toddling, willful, vivacious child; afterwards, into the loving lightener of her own cares; and later, into the peculiar sunshine of their home.

She had grieved, at times, over the imperious will, and had rejoiced when she had deemed it laid low at the Cross. Yes, she knew her so well, every trend of her mind; yet had one hinted to her that this child might carry a woman's heart in her breast, she would have resented the idea. Still more would she have been appalled could she have guessed that this same heart had awakened and responded to that strong, strange emotion whose coming is but nature's signal that the gates of childhood are forever closed.

As for Richard—"Boyish Richard!" she had said to herself more than once lately, as his fondness for Louise's company became more marked—had it not been his delight all his life to rummage her cupboards in search of cookies and toothsome sweets? Had not he and Louise led in mad pranks all over the old farm? No; it was but the veriest nonsense to think of him as her daughter's lover. Yet, following uncomfortably close upon this con-

clusion, came the remembrance of the lover-like looks which had startled her, and against her will she found herself, surrounded though she was by music, flowers, and a gay crowd, calming her newly-aroused fears with arguments why Richard Newcomb should not be her daughter's lover.

Not only the half-hushed whispers of his own personal shortcomings swept in upon her, but the worldly, irreligious life of the family. It had been to her a source of real regret that the old sweet ties of friendship had been gradually yet so surely loosened, that now each family had come to be well content to "gang their ain gait." That which one family held most dear and sacred, the other considered not at all worth the while of people of culture. Indeed, it had often seemed of late that Mrs. Newcomb took special pains to parade her own easy notions of home-life in contradistinction to the sterner code of the farm.

"There can be but one end for all this," Rachel had more than once said to herself, "and that is, complete shipwreck of the Christian faith, a complete ingulfment in the vortex of a purely worldly life. No, it must not be!" and her lips closed; and they who knew her best would have known an appeal from that decision would have been useless.

During the homeward drive, John Stevenson and his wife talked of the music of Louise's song, of the heavy, growing crops on either side of the highway; but never once did Rachel think it worth while to mention her newborn fears. Besides, if there were a growing affection between the two, happily she had decided how it could be best managed. That very evening she would await Louise's coming; would calmly, lovingly point out the possible dangers, and insist upon a halt in the boy-and-girl friendship. "How glad I am I thought of the danger in time!" was her self-satisfied comment, as, with book in hand, she sat alone to await Louise's coming.

Meanwhile the two lovers were loitering on the homeward drive. We shall not obtrude. Let the soft sheen of that same old moon which has lent its witchery to so many such scenes, and the wafted perfume of June roses and leafy verdure, be the only setting to this old yet ever new story which ardent youth pours into willing ears.

Lofty plans are made for the future; for hides there in all the world an obstacle which does not vanish on the approach of that old magician, Love? So says all the fairy lore of the past; so believes the youthful pair who so slowly ride on. It is well that the illusion is so complete; for in

the coming years one weary heart, at least, will pause in its tireless work for others' weal, and in remembrance whisper, "Surely heaven can be no sweeter." But there is a patient watcher, whose strained ear just now catches the rumble of wheels, then the sound of a low "good-night" at the door, and Louise has entered the room.

As her feet crossed the doorway, involuntarily the watcher's lips quivered slightly, then tightened. She was firm.

"Why, mother, are you still up?" the musical voice called out.

How beautiful she was that moment! Even her mother, burdened though her heart was just now with a perhaps unpleasant duty to perform, could not but let her eyes dwell on the dainty picture. The soft folds of her simple evening dress fell about her. In stature she was undersized; but her form was perfect, and had a willowy suppleness that lent a peculiar charm. But it was in the mobile earnestness of the face, which portrayed every passing emotion, and in the liquid softness of the eyes, wherein lay the greatest charm.

As she stood, looking down at her mother, she caught the wistful, tender look which, unawares, had stolen into the upturned, questioning face. Ah! how many times she had been cuddled in those

faithful arms! How many times that work-seamed hand had smoothed away her troubles! Why should she not now tell of her new happiness? Dropping suddenly upon her knees, in her old impulsive, childish fashion, she laid the soft white hand in that of her mother's, exclaiming, brokenly, "O mother! Richard—I am so happy!" and the brown head nestled in her mother's lap.

Had a thunderbolt fallen at her feet, Rachel could not have been more surprised. A half hour ago she had sat waiting kindly yet firmly to point out a future possible, undesirable result, and now that dreaded result was a fact.

What should she say? Should she call up her motherly prerogative of reproof and forbid the affair entirely? Ah, she knew the strong, unyielding will too well for that! Swifter than did ever a modern telegraph ring out an alarm, the cry for help went straight to the Throne, and with the cry was borne in the message, "Take time." Yes, she must have time—time to think it all over, to use all the tactful resources of her nature.

For answer, she kissed the sweet, young face, saying, "Another time we will talk it over; just now I can not take in your evident meaning. Surely, 't is but a boy and girl fancy."

"Mother!"

The young girl, catching the unfriendly tone, had arisen. In that one word, Rachel, in weariness of heart, recognized that the child was forever gone, and a woman, with whom she must battle, was in her stead.

"You must sleep now," she said; "another time we will talk it over," and putting her arms gently about her, led her to the little plain room she shared with Ruth.

It was long before either slept. With Louise, her mind dwelt first on her new-found happiness, and again on her mother's strange reception of it. "She thinks us children! O mother!" and the very tone of the thought implied a constancy that boded ill for Rachel's plans.

And Rachel? For hours she tossed upon the bed, and feverishly asked herself the question, "How can this foolish boy-and-girl affair be stopped?" for that it must be stopped was as clear to her as noonday. But how? And until the early morning hour she still asked herself, "How?"

The next day bade fair to be an uneventful one. The mother still felt herself unequal to the task of discussing the matter. She had not even yet told her husband. Louise, in the shyness of young girlhood, avoided all mention of it. The

shadows of the afternoon had already begun to slant when Rose, still the baby pet, who liked nothing better than a romp with Richard, came in and triumphantly announced that "Richard had come, and was talking to father."

The hot crimson blood surged up to the very roots of Louise's hair; for, on the evening before, Richard had told her that before another day closed, he meant to stand before her family as her accepted lover. "It will be so much better," he had said, "to have the matter clearly understood." The plans for the future of the young pair were yet misty. Richard had already, in a desultory manner, begun the study of law, his chosen profession; but lately he had thought much of a position with his father in the mill, and a cozy home for his young bride. But even if the future was not settled, in his frank way he was determined his new relationship to Louise should be known.

Hearing he had come, Louise sought refuge in her own little room, and Rachel nerved herself; for she felt that a crisis was at hand. The door opened, admitting her husband and Richard. On the first face was written perplexed surprise, with not a little alarm. On the other, O what a metamorphosis! Strong, manly resolution had suc-

ceeded the boyish smile. It dawned on Rachel that the "fancy" had taken deep root.

"Mother,"—her husband always spoke thus when a matter of importance was being discussed—"can you guess what Richard has asked of us?"

Rachel cast a swift, searching, almost pitying glance upon the eager, bright face.

There was no fear of her in Richard's heart. All his life she had been to him a kind of second mother. He had gone to her with a want as readily as to his own. True, he had said to Louise that, on account of different family views of life, he was not a favorite; yet love had made him bold. Surely there could be no real opposition from her who had known him all his life.

So in an instant he had gone to her side. "You know I have always loved Louise. I thought it only right to tell you that we have pledged our mutual love, and we shall be happy with your blessing and good will." An oppressive silence followed, broken at length by Rachel, whose voice sounded strange and husky.

"You know, Richard, that we would willingly make any sacrifice for Louise's good; but I am surprised that you should seriously ask this. You must know that you are each far too young."

Richard made a gesture of impatience. "Your education is incomplete; so is hers. You have made no plans for the future. It would be a positive unkindness to you both for us to consent to what you ask. In a few years you will each laugh at this passing folly."

A flood of anger rose to the young man's face at these words.

Just then he caught the flutter of a dress in the room beyond. In a moment he was by Louise's side. "Come, my darling, we must settle this together," and impetuously he led her into the room where sat her parents. What was it that caused her to seek her father's side? Mayhap, in that swift instant, she read a growing heart-tenderness. Certain it is, from her mother she expected no pity.

"Passing fancy!" It was Richard who spoke. "I tell you I verily believe this love was born in me. I could give up life easier than I could give up this. As for further education, Louise's love will be an inspiration. As for life's plans, we will be willing to wait, if we must; but such men as have had a loving heart by their side are those who have made the greatest success of life."

How well he pleaded his cause, Rachel could but think!

"Can I ever be happy—can my daughter ever be happy if she takes a husband from a careless, worldly family? Aye, if reports be true, a husband who has already learned to love sin, the first flush of love's young dream over, would he not grow weary of her sterner morals? Ah! might not these morals tone themselves down to the lower plane?" No, this alliance must never be. She must speak plainly.

"Richard, your notions of life are different from ours, as are your ideals. What to us is the most sacred, to you is a subject for jest. When Louise is older, she will see this for herself. Until then, I must think for her."

This young man, in all his life, had known but little opposition, and now to have this supreme wish disregarded was unbearable; besides, Rachel's last words had touched him as the others had not.

"And for such a cause you would part us? And yet I am to admire such religion! Louise," and he turned to the young girl, "have you not a word to say?" For answer, without looking at her mother, Louise arose and walked to her lover's side, and calmly put her hand in his, turning such a look of unutterable love upon him that a wave of happiness swallowed up his anger.

Rachel bowed her head, while a very storm swept over her. Was this the reward of motherhood? Was it for this she had known no other law than that of uncomplaining self-denial? And she knew that in this clash of wills she was right. Thus far the father had said nothing, though keenly alive to every phase of the disputed question.

Turning to his daughter, he asked, "How old are you, Louise?"

"Eighteen, my last birthday."

"Mother," said he, "time has been cheating you; Louise is no longer a child. Just so old were you when you left your father's roof to build this humble home with me."

His wife could scarcely believe what she heard. Certainly he did not approve what to her seemed unendurable. Louise quickly appealed, "Father, we are willing to wait if you think best; but help us to settle this, that there be no estrangement."

"It seems to me, mother," added he, gently, "this need not be settled definitely now. The young people have said they were willing to wait. Let Louise go with Asbury, as we have planned. Let Richard prepare himself for life; and then—mother, after all, this is something each heart must settle for itself."

These words seemed so reasonable that even Rachel, as well as Louise and Richard, felt it was best to acquiesce.

It was hard for matters to drop back into the old groove; indeed, Rachel feared more than once that the old sweet intercourse between herself and Louise was forever gone. Richard, with lover-like boldness, did not make his visits to the farm fewer, but insisted on coming and going with his old freedom. Meanwhile there was a growing good comradeship between Louise and her father.

But to be fully employed has been a cure for many a heartache. So the busy days at the farm-house served to tide over what might have been an embarrassing time. Asbury was doubly busy; for his father depended largely upon him and the younger boys for harvesting the crops. Besides, he was studying, that he might enter an advanced class at college. Louise, too, had her full share of work. So the summer went by.

Richard had yet another experience after his first interview with Louise's parents, the details of which he could not unbosom even to Louise, but which had given him much food for private reflection. Straight from the farm he had gone to his father's office. He had gone with a vague expectation of asking for a partnership

in the business or for a position with a salary. Entering the office, to which he had grown more and more a stranger, he caught sight of his father at a desk. How weary and careworn he looked! How hot and stifling the air!

Somehow, after a sight of the bowed figure, it was not so easy to begin. Yet, after a few commonplace remarks, he began his story. Rachel Stevenson's surprise did not exceed William Newcomb's. But yesterday he might have answered him gruffly; but to-day, with that handsome, glowing face before him, how could he? But a partnership? No, alas! A position with a salary? No. Father and son talked long and earnestly over the ledgers, and at the close of the conversation the father went back to his accounts with a sigh. The son passed into the sunshine with a preoccupied air. When he next saw Louise, he told her he believed his father's advice best, and that he would enter a school of law that coming autumn.

X

## College—A Study of Homes

LAZILY the first hint of September breezes played in and out of the open door of the farmhouse.

Within there was far more hurry and bustle than was common to this well-ordered home. Rapidly the mother moved about, placing now and then a forgotten package in one or the other of two trunks which stood almost ready for the final straps. Outside, by the gate, champing their bits impatiently, stood Princess and Nell, with the familiar light wagon which was to bear Asbury and Louise to the train, which in turn was to whirl them to that world of new experiences, the university.

As their father drove up, an involuntary pain clutched at their mother's heart. How often this selfsame team had driven up in their childhood to carry them to church, to school! And now they were going,—was it forever?

The morning prayer had been full of pathos at the parting, and rich in pleading for Divine

care. Yet this mother could not see them go without a personal prayer for each. So alone in the little chamber she knelt, first with Asbury, and then with Louise. With trembling voice she prayed, first, that life and health might be spared, and that each should make the most of the opportunity that was to be theirs to fit themselves for wherever duty might call.

Then followed a hurried parting, and soon the footsteps died down the gravel walk, and the two had gone out from the home.

How strangely silent the house seemed to Rachel, who was left alone! While their going was the fruition of her hopes, still it was borne in upon her, as she listlessly went about setting things to rights, that her children, as children, were gone forever. If their lives were spared, they would return only to go out again, and finally to take their places among life's toilers.

She recalled their childhood, their peculiar dispositions, and their probable future. How her heart thrilled as Asbury's exemplary life arose! How clear his brain! how studious his habits! how unflinchingly he had walked in the path of duty!

And Louise—she had been a good daughter. Throughout her whole life, her willing hands and

feet had lightened her own cares, while her cheery, bright ways and sweet voice had made much of the home-music. As for Richard, with her husband she had come to think that that had best be left to time, and surely time would settle it aright. He had left the week before for a college farther east, and she trusted that new faces and new associations would break the tie.

A few hours, and the family had returned, and the routine of work and study was resumed. Ruth and Edward were each in the academy, while John, a sturdy lad of thirteen, with little Rose, attended the school nearer home. So the house, much of the time, was strangely quiet and very unlike the old patter and bustle of busy feet.

On the farm, matters were assuming a more cheerful financial outlook. The rich pastures were flecked with cattle. The dark prairie-soil harvested good crops. Long ago good barns had been built, which now, in the autumn fruitage, were filled to overflowing.

One of the maxims of this family had been the Scriptural injunction, "Owe no man anything." So now, as the father had gotten much stronger and the younger boys were old enough to relieve him not a little, the Stevensons rightfully looked forward to a greater leisure; for the farm, while

not a means of rapid wealth, is surer than most others.

Since the abandonment of the new house at the opening of the war, the subject had not again been broached, only as something in the indefinite future. But now it was planned that when Asbury and Louise should come home for the summer vacation, they would be welcomed to the new home—nothing pretentious, but added room, which would make household cares less burdensome.

So much time has of late been given to the farmhouse, that it is high time we were turning to the more pretentious home of the Newcombs. We have already seen the old friendship wavering under the strain of growing uncongenial tastes. In addition—but perhaps they fancied it—both John and Rachel thought, since the refusal to remain longer on the note as security, Mr. Newcomb had been strangely reserved, even to the point of avoidance. Moreover, Rachel's known hostility to the affair between Richard and Louise touched Margaret as perhaps nothing else had; for in Richard's love for this sweet, blithe girl, her mother-heart perceived his strongest safeguard, and her selfishness could see nothing amiss in the sacrifice of innocent young girlhood upon the altar of a hoped-for reformation.

Yet, if a growing fear lurked about her heart, the years saw no change in her home-life. Home-wines were still found in the cellar. She refused to see danger lurking in the amber-colored, quivering jelly, which bore the pungent flavor of choice old Burgundy, nor in the brandied peaches upon her cellar shelves.

Nor did she think it worth while, now that there were young Christians in the family, to attempt new reading habits. Another might have argued that these should be supplied with a literature which in itself would foster and develop the new experience, and bind them irrevocably to the new life. Not she. She had lived a life of moral rectitude, why not her children? She did not ask more than a moral life for them; so she knew no regret when Marie and Therese lapsed into the old worldly life, nor but little uneasiness when Richard, at long intervals, came down to the morning meal with aching head and dull eyes. Had not even some great men been a little wild in their youth? She received with extreme satisfaction his ready acquiescence in his father's wishes for a college and law course. She was sure he would come home crowned with honor.

Marie had yet another year in the academy. She had always been a beautiful child, and was

growing into a lovely young womanhood. Her heart and impulses were good. In a humbler or Christian home she might have developed into a strong womanhood; as it was, she became a type of thousands who sacrifice everything to the demands of dress and society. She could "play" a little on the pianoforte; but of music as an art, a life study, she had not dreamed. Had she known the first elements of hard work and patience, she might, in time, have done something as an artist; as it was, she was content to paint what her young friends styled "perfectly lovely pictures," and then—smiled.

Like her type, she would probably marry early. Indeed, in the home-circle, her "engagement" to Charlie Hudson, "a good fellow," and, what was better, the son of Banker Hudson, was already acknowledged; but the marriage was not to occur for a year. Once married, she would become, in all likelihood, a conventional society woman not unlike her mother.

Therese was something of the same pattern, yet there was a certain dash about her that gave one a sense of uneasiness akin to that which a restless team imparts, not knowing exactly what turn it may take. She was a winsome girl, about the same age as Ruth Stevenson, and between

these two a warm friendship existed. From earliest childhood she had been inordinately fond of reading. She it was who eagerly cut the magazine pages to devour its monthly dish of "serials." She had a keen literary perception, and had she had a faithful guide into the sweets of poetry or the wealth of history, or had she been directed even to the better class of fiction, how much of sorrow would have been averted! As it was, she was left largely to follow her own inclinations. To do her mother justice, when she perceived this growing and absorbing taste, she did try to check it. As well try to dam a stream and leave the fountain untouched. So Therese grew to live more and more in the realms of fancy, often imagining herself the heroine of whose woes she was reading. No wonder she found the Church irksome, the home dull, and the plodding studies of school-life unendurable.

Standing in life "where the brook and river meet," unconsciously to herself, she was beginning to long for an exciting experience akin to that of the heroines whose exploits she found so thrilling.

Before we leave the Newcombs to look after the students, whom we left rapidly whirling collegeward, we must look in upon Mr. New-

comb himself. To do this it will be necessary to seek the office; for he is seldom at home, except to hurried meals and at late hours for slumber.

Though scarcely fifty years of age, his hair is rapidly whitening, the old-time sprightliness of step is gone, yet the eyes maintain the old alertness, with the addition of certainly a trace of feverish anxiety.

Since the days of his first speculation in Burrtonville real estate, he had lived a restless life. Through the troublous days of the war, he had so successfully managed his large interests that his fortune had doubled and trebled.

Within the last year, Mrs. Newcomb noticed with anxiety that he was becoming more and more absorbed in his business, and taking on a haggard and preoccupied air. She had never been lacking in wifely devotion, and it was with forebodings she began to expect a breaking-down of his health, and to urge him to take time for recuperation; but instead he seemed to apply himself even more closely.

He had always been a loving husband and indulgent father. Nothing that money could devise to make the home happier was lacking, hence there never was a thought but that the family purse was unlimited.

Mrs. Newcomb and her daughters were still punctilious in their attendance upon the morning services at the church, but it had come to pass that Mr. Newcomb scarcely ever accompanied them. Indeed, he found no day so free from interruptions, consequently none so well adapted for work on his ledger. So, Sabbath after Sabbath, this overworked man of multiplied cares sought to untangle the chaotic threads of the past week's work.

But were they chaotic? Not once did Mrs. Newcomb suspect this; but such ugly rumors were rapidly gaining credence! As a drowning man rapidly divests himself of any burden which hinders his life-struggle, so it was apparent that William Newcomb was drawing his business affairs into a narrower circle.

Still the ponderous wheels of the great mill swung around with lightning rapidity. The furnace fires glowed brightly, and the huge chimneys were black with the cloud which overhung them night and day.

There were certainly no signs of decay about that busy hive, and if aught of the rumors were true, it was compelled to remain a rumor; for the lips of the proprietor were closely sealed, and his bearing as self-confident as ever.

## XI

## Developed Characters

IT was with mingled feelings that Asbury and Louise found themselves at the last moment hurried from the quiet of the home upon the journey which was to open to them the coveted new life. Keen regret was felt as the reflection obtruded itself upon their young minds, as it had upon their mother's, that the old home-life was forever gone.

But just ahead lay that wonderful future called "life," whose successes and failures so surely awaited them, and before which intervened a few coveted years of college life. And as each recalled the self-denial of the family life, the hard-working father and mother, it seemed marvelous that the dream of years was being realized. So it might be forgiven them if, with the natural regret, was mingled not a little proud exhilaration and joyous expectancy for the life ahead.

This was particularly true of Asbury. All his life he had been naturally studious. The quiet home evenings had been rich in their implanting

in his mind of broad plans for the future; for during these had been developed an intimate acquaintance with men and women whose lives had shaped Church and State, and as the acquaintance grew, his young heart had beaten in unison with their struggles and triumphs, and unconsciously had grown up the desire also to live for a purpose, making some little corner of the world better for his having lived in it. Then had come his conversion. Again, the still, solemn promptings of the Spirit, which knew no rest till he had given his life to the service of his King. And now he was about realizing his desires. Little wonder that the past rapidly melted into the glorious future.

Louise, though in a different way, shared his enthusiasm. The parting between herself and Richard had been full of mutual hopes and pledges for the future, and though years should intervene before the fruition of their hopes, still they were young and strong in each other's love; therefore the parting was without bitterness.

And though she began her collegiate course with a tumult of heart of which staid Asbury knew nothing, yet it was with real girlish enthusiasm that she, too, found herself journeying collegeward.

The journey occupied a day and a night, and

after a few hours the dainty lunch was gotten out. How welcome the flaky bread! how delicious the home butter! and what motherly remembrances had been exercised in preparing some specially-liked delicacy!

About dusk the following day, the travelers found themselves at the end of their journey.

They experienced a momentary shade of disappointment as they stepped into the fitful, weird light of the platform. How small the town! But each remembered it was the university they had come to seek, and the great noisy crowds of young men and women proclaimed it a university town. Trunks came tumbling off by the dozen. Old friends, jolly comrades of the past, called out to each other in noisy and exuberant greeting. Yet if the many were thus at home in their surroundings, not a few stood hesitatingly, not knowing just which way to turn. Among these last were Asbury and Louise; but not long. They soon found temporary lodging for the night, and the next day found them settled—Asbury to room near the college, and Louise in a home farther away. Acquaintances were rapidly made, the college course was studied, each was classified, and student life began.

It was indeed a delightful experience to awaken

in the morning absolutely free from care. No waiting, insisting breakfast to be gotten; no hurrying, that the burdensome dishwashing might be gotten rid of before school; no lowing stock to be fed and watered; no horses to be curried; in short, perfect freedom from the old, exacting cares, with time to study, time for exercise, with the environments constantly tending to bring out the best there was in one. Here was an entire community of young people, all, with hardly an exception, earnestly at work. At home, in the academy, both Asbury and Louise had been known as the "best students;" but here they soon found that if the old order of supremacy was to be maintained, hard study was before each.

Perhaps in no place in which one finds himself is the aristocracy of intellect so apparent as in a college. Wealth, social position, even the cut and material of one's clothes, matters but little; but the essential question is, "Are they good students?" It took but little time for our young friends to demonstrate this question to the satisfaction alike of Faculty and students, and they were soon received into the inner sanctum of good favor and fellowship.

So well had Asbury improved his time at home, that after his examination he found he would have

but three years in the college. He hoped for an additional year or two for special preparation for his life-work.

Louise, it will be remembered, had yet another year in the academy, so she felt well satisfied upon being admitted to the freshman class, where she soon became known as a hard-working student. Her sunny disposition, that had made sunshine in the old farmhouse, as well as her ready helpfulness, soon made her deservedly popular. Added to these traits was her clear, rich voice, which soon made her presence at social gatherings much sought after.

No, Louise Stevenson did not go to college as a recluse, to dream of nothing but her absent lover, but rather as a clear-brained, wide-awake girl, who meant to get as much as possible out of life. She made many friends; but her most intimate ones soon came to know that there was a reserve, a sort of inner sanctuary, into which none entered; for Louise was faithful to her absent lover.

Though her mother was building much on the new scenes that were to break the fatal spell of early love, with Louise such scenes could come—she could even grow to be a strong factor in these associations—yet even as the needle points irre-

sistibly towards the North Star, quite as surely did the soul of this earnest and sincere girl cleave to the absent. Poor, anxious mother-heart! You may as well know now that there is nothing which will sever this tie! Nothing? Hold! There is a pure, brave heart in that girlish breast; there is clear knowledge of right and wrong; more, a hatred of wrong; and there is a will strong enough to lay down a life or a love if right should so demand. Closely should the absent lover watch his actions, lest they be the power that breaks the sweet tie.

Among the new friends Louise had made, her room-mate, Emma Ward, grew to be one of the dearest. Her home was in a distant Eastern city. About it was that rare atmosphere—the union of wealth with true Christian culture; and rarer still, she had seen this wealth held simply as a means providentially given to help in the problem of the world's betterment, and one of her earliest lessons had been that the possession or non-possession of wealth by the individual was often a mere accident of circumstances; but that lack of this, in determining friendships, should be the solid rock of personal worth and character; and hence, although in the Ward mansion the petty economies and hard work with which the Steven-

son young people were so familiar were unknown, yet the ideals were the same. In the mansion, quite as truly as in the farmhouse, was God loved and served. Therefore it was not strange that a warm personal friendship sprang into existence, a friendship that came to be far-reaching in its effects upon Louise.

Emma had been in the college the previous year, so had not about her the shyness of the newcomer. She was known as a good student, yet not particularly brilliant. Moreover she was of a bright, fun-loving disposition. From the first hour of meeting, she was strongly attached to the shy country girl, and when, one Sunday evening, in the privacy of their room, Louise began, with her marvelously sweet voice, to sing some of the Church hymns so familiar in both homes, the work was done—Emma's homage was complete from that hour. As for Louise, the friendship proved to be the one touch necessary to draw her out of herself, and teach her the delights of the social side of college life.

* * * * *

But there is yet another student in whom we are interested. Richard Newcomb had left for college with emotions far different from any he

had before known—emotions little guessed by any of his home circle, save his father. To understand these, it is necessary to go back to that morning when, angry at the unexpected opposition of Louise's mother, he strode out from the farmhouse, determined to lay his plans before his father. It will be remembered that after this interview he had gone out silent and oppressed, willing to abide by his father's suggestions. Let us go back to that interview. As this prematurely old, care-engrossed man, who, like many another, had lost his family in a sea of business, looked into the handsome, glowing face, there swept into his heart a vision of the old days at Lynton, when he had wooed and won the beautiful Margaret. Patiently he heard the story to the end, but the remorselessly keen eyes gave no trace of tenderness as he sternly said: "You are barely twenty-one, not yet out of school. You have no profession and notions of business that I have ever been able to discover."

Richard winced. Yes, he had often declaimed against the irksome confinement of the office.

"Do you think it wise to take a wife to poverty?"

"But, father, I see my folly. Give me a small, humble place in your business."

"My business!" bitterly interrupted the elder. "Come with me;" and there in the curtained alcove, the place where Mr. Newcomb spent so much time with his books, Richard caught his first glimpse of the bankruptcy which, like a threatening sword, hung over the entire Newcomb interests.

The young man was stunned, bewildered; for while rumors of "Newcomb's changing luck" had, within the years, been passed from lip to lip, and far-seeing business men, foreseeing the end, were carefully withdrawing their own capital from enterprises he still considered safe, yet this all was wholly unsuspected by the family, and fell upon Richard with the force of a thunderbolt.

"We may avert it for a year," continued the father; "but if you are wise you will go to college while you can, get a profession, and be ready for life."

"Yes, it is the inevitable," thought the stunned Richard. "I will go."

The college selected was one of the oldest, and carried the proud prestige of being one of the most influential in all America. Long lists of its alumni were holding positions of honor and trust throughout the country. While this remained true, yet some other matters were not so satisfactory.

While there was a class of hard-working, painstaking students, who were making the most of their opportunities, there was a large "crowd," or several "crowds," who spent their evenings in bacchanalian revelry, and among the unsatisfactory results was the fact, well known and widely commented upon, that many students went out from this proud institution utterly wrecked in morals.

Richard, upon his entrance, was soon a favorite. He entered with energy upon his studies. His fine physique and manly appearance won for him many favorable comments; for even at that day athletics were coming into prominence. Then he had a certain boyish artlessness or frankness, which strongly appealed to the heart. His natural oratorical powers soon came out in the society meetings; so it was not long till it was decided that he would be an addition to any "set."

He had gone to college with such strong resolutions to bring out and develop the best that was in him. Perhaps these latter might have been helped had he chosen a college—or rather, if his parents had chosen for him one—which had cared less for prestige and more for the morals of its students, one that did not fear to stand before the world as a distinctively Christian institution. But of this we shall see.

## XII

## Richard and Louise

"IT is a fact that in every college, however small or great, there are at least two 'crowds' or 'sets,' oftener more, and much of a student's success depends upon the set with which he becomes identified." So wrote a wise editor, and so, one morning shortly after her arrival, read Louise; and reading it, she laid the paper down to speculate upon the truth of the statement. Yes, it was true; even her short experience told her as much. There was even here, she recognized, though held in check by the high moral character of the institution, a set, bound by ties of congeniality, whose watchword was "fun and a good time." If they could only have fun, no price was too dear to pay for it. Yet there was another, and these made up the majority, who were hard-working and painstaking, reaching results not attempted by the gayer crowd.

Into which had these young friends of ours fallen? They had been hard-working at home; they were not likely to choose idleness now. Their

sweetest associations, outside of their home-life, had been found in the Church. They naturally turned to it now, and erelong these two became known, not only as careful students, but consistent Christians as well; Louise, in the meanwhile, helped and broadened, as it is not hard for us to guess, by the companionship of that refined, cultured young Christian, Emma Ward.

Asbury naturally took his place among the young theologues. His room-mate, Earnest Warren, was, like himself, a divinity student, yet from his predilections it seemed not unlikely that he might eventually find his niche as a teacher of the sciences he loved so well. His home was in the State of Ohio, and his family of the "plain people," who had economized that their son might have that lever denied to them, an education. After this glance at the associates of Asbury and Louise, with whom it is safe to leave them, we turn to ask, What of those of Richard Newcomb?

Among the great body of students was one, Will Braceton, a fellow of rugged, robust build, and withal of a good mind. He might have easily led his class in any study had he chosen; but he chose to be the leader of a set which was itself a leader in most of the mischief which a wild, fun-

loving crowd of unrestrained young fellows could devise. Had they been contented with harmless fun, or even mere mischief, all might have been well; for neither is Dame Fortune nor yet the world such a churl but that it condones the harmless exuberance of youth. But it was not uncommon for them to gather in Braceton's room, or some place of his appointment, drink wine, and carouse till the early morning hours. Yet this was not known outside of the company, and, with many, Braceton stood for much that was good.

A few weeks after the opening of the school-year, at one of these "evenings" in Will's room, he suddenly said: "I tell you what, boys, that Richard Newcomb is all right. We must show him every possible attention, and win him for our crowd."

From that hour, Richard had no need of home-sickness; for there were patronizing friends at every turn, and very soon the character of the new friendships became too evident. Richard's past experiences instantly warned him of the danger lurking in the proffered friendship, and he was brave and firm in his determination that he would allow nothing to interfere with the steady course of hard work he had marked out for himself. Ah! had it not been for that caged demon of appetite,

which, having been fed and pampered into existence, angry at its whilom confinement, revenged itself now by wild periods, when it clamored to reassert itself!

Yet without special incident the months of the college-year sped by with astonishing swiftness, and the summer vacation began to look entrancingly near, not only to Richard, but to Louise and Asbury as well.

One day, perhaps a month before Commencement, Louise and Emma had gone to their room from a rehearsal of some music for Commencement, when Emma, who had been balancing herself upon the edge of the bed, said, "Louise, I tell you, you have a fortune in your voice."

"A fortune!" and Louise's lips curled a bit at the thought. "And so, Miss Thrifty, I suppose I had better go on the stage."

"O, you need not be so uppish about the matter," Emma replied, with school-girl freedom. "There might be a fortune and still no stage. Our Church pays Mrs. Stanton twenty-five dollars each Sabbath, which is a fortune not to be sneered at, with no stage to bother a conscientious little Puritan."

"Twenty-five dollars for a few songs," mused Louise when alone. "Twenty-five dollars, Sab-

bath after Sabbath, even for a few months, how many comforts such a sum would buy for the home-folks! Yes, how far such a sum would go towards defraying the heavy college expenses!" Louise resolved in her heart to study even harder to bring out every possible quality of her voice; and if—yes, if the future should ever bring such an opportunity, she might be prepared to grasp it.

How strangely are the mingled threads of our destiny interwoven! On the day following this conversation, Emma broke the seal of a letter from home. Among other items of home news was the casual one that Mrs. Stanton, the soprano, was in rapidly failing health, and had been ordered to the mountains. The next mail home, unknown to Louise, carried a letter extolling Louise's singing, citing references if desired, and urging her father to secure the position during the summer for Louise. And strange to say (no, not strange either, for Emma's father was the one person in the Church who had this matter almost solely in charge; besides, he not only had great faith in his daughter's judgment, but had grown to feel a great interest in the sweet-voiced girl of whom she wrote so enthusiastically), a letter came, offering the vacant place to Louise for the summer, with the same salary as that paid to Mrs. Stanton, with the added

assurance that, if desired, a class of music pupils could be secured. This seemed almost like an offer from a fairyland to Louise. She wanted to accept it; but, then, how hungry she had grown for the expected visit home, and this would mean another year's absence!

With realistic vividness the loved farmhouse arose to view; but the picture was not without its touch of pathos. There were father and mother, worn and becoming bent with toil; then there were the boys,—pretty soon they ought to be knocking at a college door; and there was Ruth and little Rose. Yes, the family needs were imperative, and certainly this was a providential duty; but she must write the home-folks and get their sanction. And we, too, will follow the letter bearing this question to its destination, the farm.

June, with its rare wealth of beauty, had come. The great rose-climber, which yearly changed the whole south side of the Stevenson home into a bewildering maze of beauty, hung full of rich clusters of lovely roses.

Within the home, Ruth and her mother were busy about the morning tasks. The great fireplace seems a bank of coolness; for Ruth, with an artistic touch, has filled it full of tall, fringe-like boughs of full-grown asparagus, and upon the red bricks of

the hearth stands a great, old-fashioned bowl of roses. Just now she is placing another in the window-ledge. As she does so she is saying to her mother: "I can hardly realize that within a very few weeks, Asbury and Louise will be here. Dear me, how we will welcome them!" A tender smile played over the mother's lips as she replied, "And we must try not to think how few the weeks of the vacation will be."

Just then the sound of brisk hoofs echoed from the shady lane, and Edward soon came in, saying, "A letter from Louise!"

Mrs. Stevenson sat down to read, and read with growing wonder the offer of the distant Church. Father soon came in, and together the wonderful news was discussed. "No, they could not consider the offer. Give up Louise for another year?" But an hour ago, life had seemed richer, fuller, as the memory of the sweet girl had brightened the little room. So said Rachel, so thought the father, and so said the brothers and sisters. Rachel took the letter to again read, in the quiet of the little back porch. What a tempting offer it was, after all! Just then her eyes lighted upon her husband, who, lost in thought, had leaned, half wearily, against the well-curb. Yes, he was growing old, if not in years, at least in toil. How bent the

form! The plain working-garb gave no hint of the strong, honest heart which throbbed underneath this uncouth covering. A sense of the superior advantages the children were having swept through her heart; and she turned again to a paragraph in Louise's letter:

"At first I could not think of this, I want so much to see you all; but when I remember how hard you all work, and how soon the other children will demand an education, I am forced to believe this offer is a providence, and that I ought to go."

Rachel was glad the inexorable dinner claimed her attention, that she might rid herself in action of this new question that clamored for a settlement. And it was settled. Another day a letter went to Louise, bidding her God-speed, and saying perhaps it was best that she should go.

Emma, in true school-girl fashion, almost went wild over the decision; for it had been her greatest wish that Louise should accompany her home, and now it was coming about as she had wished. And she gave expression to her delight by waltzing the highly perturbed Louise about the room in the most approved school-girl style.

* * * * *

Asbury had known nothing of all this, as yet. On the very day this home letter had come to Louise, Emma met him on the college walk (by the way, we have not had time to mention it before, these young people were getting to be extraordinarily good friends), and forthwith proceeded to tell him the wonderful piece of news. He, of course, was more than surprised, and with the surprise was mingled a queer feeling he could not define. He knew it was a trial for Louise to give up her visit home; a trial to the home folks to give it up. Still it was such rare good luck, why was n't there anything he could do? But no; his duty seemed plain. He must go home and help through the summer on the farm.

* * * * *

Louise dreaded most of all to tell Richard; for they had counted so much on the summer together. But while she hesitated, a letter came from him, telling her his father wanted him to take a western trip, as soon as vacation had come, and look after some land, which would take perhaps a month or longer; but that on his way home from college he would stop for a visit. Poor Louise! She must not be thought lacking in loyalty to the home-folks if, after this letter, there came a greater

reconciliation to the loss of her vacation. These few remaining weeks were given to hard study; for she determined to make herself worthy of Emma's strong commendation.

One day, as she was returning from practice, Emma came rushing out to meet her, saying a stranger had called, and before she had time to think, she was ushered into the presence of Richard Newcomb, who, having finished the year's examinations, and caring nothing for the closing exercises, had come on, again to be in the presence of her whom he had so truly loved. Ah, the all-sufficiency of those hours! The skies seemed bluer and brighter than ever before; the lazy flecks of white clouds floated above in a dreamy sort of way, strangely indicative of the present completeness of the life of each. Let heartaches cease! let forebodings for the future be still! Simply to be together was happiness enough in itself. Richard found that the shy country girl he had loved and won had in a year become such a perfect woman that any man might feel proud, even of a glance. Hard study and cultured surroundings had done their work well in rounding and developing the person as well as the mind.

But his greatest surprise came when he heard her sing. Yes, that was the same old sweet voice

which had joined with him in many a duet in that far-off time, their childhood, or in the later years of their academy life; but how changed! Had he ever dreamed of anything so full and rich? And with a thrill of pride, he said over and over to himself, "And she is mine; that true heart is mine forever."

The wealth of Crœsus is none too great to lay at the feet of such a peerless creature! How annoying the fate that had brought his father to such financial straits! O well, he had tided through a year; perhaps in another, his feet would be on firm ground again. If not, this woman he loved would value wealth of mind and of heart higher than of purse, and nothing should deter or hinder him in climbing the highest intellectual heights.

Such were his thoughts, such his meditations; but why, just here, did he pause, or why the sudden mantling of his cheek? O, not for the world would he have Louise know the cause of this blush that, in the purity of her presence, there had rushed over him a realization of the coarseness of the Braceton set, of which he was now a fully-accredited member. How he despised himself and his weakness as he remembered the wild, hilarious evenings, when, with wine and

cards, he and the fellows had had a "time!" Looking now into Louise's clear eyes he saw the danger—a danger which, to tell the truth, had often suggested itself during the collegiate year, but which he had silenced by the argument: "Why should I not belong to this crowd? They all come from families that represent wealth and culture; besides, they are all good fellows, and mean nothing more than the enlivenment of the dull routine of college-life." What if there were wine and cards? He did not expect to become a total abstainer; even now, in his father's cellar, were bottles of choice, rich, home-made wines; and as for cards? Yes, there *were* people strangely prejudiced against them; but the shapely, white hands of his mother had first taught him skill in their use. Of course, with all this, as she had said, "discretion" must be used, and he prided himself upon the possession of this valuable quality.

Yet would he have had Louise know this "discretion" had more than once failed him during these closing weeks, and that he had been taken to his room the worse for wine?

When he had first gone to college, the Sabbath bells awakened thoughts of Louise and of God. He then regularly attended church; for while there he had seemed nearer her whom he

loved. But with the flight of the months, and under the influence of his new companions, he had gone less and less. Yet now, looking into the pure eyes of Louise, he was conscious of a desire for a different life. What if, after all, the Stevenson theory of life were the correct one? What if Aunt Rachel were not the fanatic he had so often called her?

Yet he could not allow such uncomfortable thoughts to mar this week of great happiness; so he resolutely brushed aside the obtruding thought. There was the usual crowding, into one little week, of sermons, lectures, and addresses. To all such it became his pleasure to accompany his betrothed.

One evening there was a lecture before one of the ladies' literary societies. The subject of the speaker was the old one of a "Woman's Kingdom," which, after a few complimentary prefatory remarks concerning women as philanthropists, reformers, *et al.*, the speaker proceeded to show was the home. One sentence burned into the brain of Richard Newcomb. It was this:

"There can be no such thing as happiness when husband and wife find themselves with uncongenial tastes. The home is a superstructure depending for its success upon the complete union

of two hearts, and this union can not exist between persons of tastes diametrically opposed."

"O, that is all nonsense!" Richard had said to himself, as the speaker, continuing, urged caution upon a young girl of religious habits who found herself coming to care for a man who did not possess them.

But down in his heart he acknowledged the truth of what he was hearing by resolving to eschew the friendships that were surely leading him to "tastes diametrically opposed" to those of the sweet girl by his side.

## XIII

## The Preacher—A Soprano—Flossie

THE week passed all too quickly. Soon, Asbury and Richard had turned their faces toward the home of their childhood, and Louise was journeying Eastward in her new capacity of wage-earner.

Asbury received a warm welcome home, though the joy, like many another joy, had its bitter edge; for the bright young girl who should have accompanied him was miles away, and many months must elapse before she would brighten the home with her presence.

He showed at once how utterly unspoiled he was by going to work on the farm with all the energy of his nature, spurred on, it must be confessed, by the secret thought that, work hard as he might, dainty, girlish Louise was doing more than he.

What a comfort he was to his father, and how that father grew to lean upon and to place more and more upon those broad, manly shoulders the burdens of the farm! As for Rachel, never did

Hannah, in the sweet old Bible story, feel more genuine mother-pride in her priestly son than did this modern mother in this her first-born, chosen of the Lord.

His influence, too, was felt outside the home-circle; for he became a wonderful inspiration to the young people of the Church. It has never been estimated how much good even one intelligent, thoroughly-consecrated young man can do in influencing and holding to the right other young people of less well-established principles.

During the summer an event occurred which, throughout his whole life, served to bind him to the home Church; that is, he was licensed to preach. It occurred in this wise: At a meeting of the Church officiary, the pastor had presented his name, and the necessary papers were prepared which gave him an accredited right to preach the gospel, his mother knowing nothing at the time of the intention.

When his father returned from this meeting, he went at once to the kitchen where she was at work, and thinking to surprise her said, "Mother, you must have a little extra for dinner; the preacher will dine with us." And she, taking the matter seriously—indeed, knowing no reason why she should not—replied, scarcely looking up, "Well,

catch me one of those plump chickens out at the barn." Willing to humor the joke, John went out to the barn, and soon a chicken lay quivering in a vessel on the table. Leaving the dressing to Ruth, Rachel slipped on a fresh apron, and went in for a word of greeting with the guest. Greatly to her surprise no one was about.

"They have gone out on the farm to discuss the growing crops and stock." So saying to herself, she went out to the kitchen, and soon an appetizing dinner was spread. In response to the dinner-call, her husband, with Asbury and the rest of the family, promptly presented themselves.

"Why, where is the preacher?" asked Rachel, looking about.

"Here!" and John Stevenson laid his sun-browned hand upon the broad shoulders of his first-born.

Happy mother! Though for more than a year she had known this was to be, yet the announcement of the finality thrilled her unaccountably. He was near her when his father bore the news, and she bent forward with a kiss, saying, "Having put your hands to the plow, see to it that with you there shall be no turning back."

The words seemed prophetic. Years after, when the way was especially rough, the remem-

brance of this home scene and his mother's words held him closely to his work.

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Richard Newcomb found little to interest him with Louise away. In a private talk with his father, he learned that the financial outlook had not improved, and that unless something unforeseen should occur, the inevitable must soon be faced. Mr. Newcomb, a victim of that strange cowardice that often affects men of his stamp, had found it impossible to acquaint his family with the threatened disaster; and Richard, knowing it all, looked with a bitterness akin to anger upon the luxuries on every side. For upon his return, he found preparations were being made on a lavish scale for Marie's wedding, which was to occur in the early July, to allow of a western and mountain tour.

Her betrothed held a good position in his father's bank, and there was no reason why the wedding should be longer delayed. So, at the appointed time, amid a great deal of *eclat*, Marie went out from her father's home.

The Stevensons were among the invited guests, but only Asbury and Ruth were present. These returned with glowing accounts of the elegance of

the lunch, the richness of the bride's trousseau, and the value of the presents, among the last being a deed from Mr. Newcomb for one of the handsomest residences in the town.

After the departure of the bridal party, Richard, too, took a western train, carefully instructed by his father, who assured him that upon the value of some western investments depended freedom from disaster. But before he went, a long letter bore to Louise an account of the wedding, and assurance of his undying love.

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In a large city, not far from the steady plash of ocean's wave, on a lovely June Sabbath, a young girl awaited with a beating heart the hour for service in the great aristocratic stone church which faced one of the loveliest avenues in that great city. One does not need to be told that this is our young friend Louise. She had known before coming that Emma's home was one of luxury, and that the church in which she was to sing was one of the best in the city; yet, country raised as she had been, she had not dreamed of such magnificence. The rich mellow light stole in and was filtered through the translucent mosaic of the windows. The very echo of her footfall, as she had glided up the aisle, had been caught and held

imprisoned in the soft, yielding plush of the carpet. The pews, indeed every appointment of the church, betokened luxury and wealth.

Could she hope to satisfy so critical an audience as worshiped there?

Emma was sure that she could, yet Louise had never in her life been self-confident, and it was little wonder that she trembled in anticipation of the ordeal.

She had taken her place early, and as the audience gathered, she saw more than one curious glance towards the new soprano. The great organ pealed forth its most sonorous melody, then died away into a gentle accompaniment. She was about to sing. The book she held was open at that matchless solo, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." With the first note of the organ had gone up a whispered prayer. For answer came, with wonderful distinctness, a vision of home and the sweet home faith of her parents, and of the plain home church where she had knelt and received knowledge of sins forgiven. Ah yes; she knew of a truth what she was about to sing, and without a falter the clear young voice took up the refrain, and bore it aloft, and sang it so feelingly that the audience, with a first gesture of surprise, settled itself to simple enjoyment. She had won!

As she sat down, the tremulous plume on Mrs. De Manderville's bonnet nodded by far too vigorously to suit the usual calm poise of that lady, as she whispered to Mrs. Millionaire, just at elbow touch with her, "A wonderful voice; yes, a wonderful voice!"

"Yes, and a wonderful amount of *heart* too," Mrs. Millionaire had telegraphed back, and if any one had a right to recognize this last-named quality, certainly it was this same lady; for a great many of the poor of her city and the interests of her Church accused her of a like possession, and blessed the thousands that accompanied it.

Louise had expected on coming that with Emma's or her mother's help she would secure a good boarding-house; but this both Mr. and Mrs. Ward would not allow. Their house was large and roomy, they said, and to allow Emma's friend to seek a home elsewhere could not be thought of. So, throughout all the long, delightsome days of that summer, Louise was an inmate of this luxurious home. For the first time in her life she came to know the meaning of the word "leisure;" but her industrious soul could not brook the enforced idleness. So she talked with Mrs. Ward about securing a class of music pupils. Now the Wards, though among the most wealthy and cultured of

the great congregation which gathered in the aristocratic stone church, and with a little touch of perhaps excusable pride could look back on several generations of ancestors possessing like qualities, yet no dwellers in cottage or country farm were ever more sensible, nor held more exalted notions of the true dignity of labor, and instead of discouraging Louise, rejoiced in her disposition to work. Mrs. Ward went at once to Mrs. Millionaire about the matter, and very soon Louise had a good, paying class.

Nor did this young Christian fail to identify herself with the active work of the Church. She found that this particular Church, luxurious though it was, undertook and carried on much practical Christian work. Under the especial fostering care of Mrs. Millionaire was a band of young girls who, even so many years ago as that, made for their special object the study of the great work of foreign missions and the raising of funds for the same. Into this, Louise entered with all her heart. Years ago her interest had been awakened by letters from the girl-wife of a missionary. With such a foundation, she developed such an intelligent interest that Mrs. Millionaire learned to depend more and more upon her. A passing glance at this lady may not be out of place.

Though her purse and bank account were alike heavy, yet her real wealth lay in her active, clear brain, her philanthropic nature, and her true consecration to her Master's cause. She had been for years (this was before the era of separate missionary organizations in each denomination) a valued manager in the Woman's Union Missionary Society, and of her great wealth she held herself to be but a steward. She felt that her best brain-work must be done in using this for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and was never happier than when she found a young, enthusiastic person who evinced an interest in these matters that lay so near her heart. Little wonder she seized upon and grew to love the bright-faced, earnest young soprano.

Thus the summer passed happily. Her singing gave great satisfaction, and her class of music pupils gave her full employment.

The Ward family consisted of a brother and sister younger than Emma, besides a married daughter, a Mrs. Herron, the mother of two sweet little children. These lived in an elegant home in the same block. But mother and children were often at the paternal home.

From Emma she learned that Mr. Herron was a lawyer, his father, Judge Herron, being one of

the most highly and favorably known men in the State.

Of course, Louise had no wish to intrude into the privacy of home affairs, but in an intangible and indefinable manner it was borne in upon her that there was something wrong with this home that should have been so happy. The young wife would at times remain for days in her father's home, shut in her own room. If seen, her eyes were red with weeping.

Once, as Emma was driving her about the city, upon one of the fashionable streets, the eye of Louise was caught by a large and beautiful building.

Upon inquiring the use or name of the structure, Emma responded, with more bitterness than Louise had ever seen her manifest, "The devil's gateway."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say. It is a fashionable club-house, and there Tom Herron imbibes the demon that is killing my sister. Yes, I believe it will kill her!"

Louise was silent. Could young Herron be a common drunkard?

Emma continued: "O, I hate it! I hate it! hate it! I hate everything that wine touches. I

would as soon marry an Asiatic leper as a man who takes a single glass."

Why did Louise start? Why did her heart sink so suddenly? Ah, but Richard! It was all false! He had never drunk! She would lay down her life on that certainty! Still, the vehement words of Emma rankled in her heart.

This question had always seemed so far off, so remote, so associated with people in another world from her own. She thought of her good father, of her brothers, and rejoiced that they were safe; but could it be possible that this serpent could wind its sinuous way into a Christian home as it surely had into the Wards'?

Perhaps a month passed, and the shadows seemed almost gone from pretty Mrs. Herron's face, when, one night, Louise was awakened by a noise at the street door.

"O, let me in! Do let me in, quick!"

"It is Lucy's voice," said Emma, springing up to go to the door. Her father was before her, and in a moment the trembling, weeping woman, this daughter of wealth, entered, herself half clad, and with sweet Baby Flossie in her arms and Master Harry by her side; these two in their night-clothes, as she had snatched them from their cot.

There was no attempt now to hide the family

skeleton. Lucy told them that for weeks, as indeed they had known, her husband had been sober and repentant. As usual, he had made many promises of reform; but O, the dreadful appetite! How like a caged wild beast! "An hour ago," she continued, "a cab brought him home from the club, wild, beside himself with frenzy, threatening to kill both himself and me; and O, I was sure he would [at another time he would have laid down his life for this woman], when I fled through the door with the children."

Just then there was a scramble at the door. Louise drew back in horror as a wild-eyed, reeling man, revolver in hand, entered. Could this be the elegant Mr. Herron, usually the marvel of good breeding? Yes, having missed his wife, and dimly realizing in his frenzy that she must have gone to her father's, he had, in his drunken fury, followed her. Before any one could know or guess his design—indeed, it all occurred in less time than it has taken to record it—he aimed the weapon at his wife, who, upon his entrance, had stood stock still, with Flossie in her arms; then, placing the muzzle to his own heart, fired, and fell forward dead.

Mrs. Herron, too, lay upon the floor; but whether killed or not, not one knew in that awful

hour. Emma was the only one who retained her self-possession, and she stooped to take, from the arms so tightly clasping her, little Flossie, when she suddenly cried out: "God help us! Flossie is killed!"

It was true. The bullet intended for his wife had in an instant stilled the infant life, but the mother was unhurt. Hers was the harder fate, to awaken to a knowledge of what had occurred. Words can not picture the woe and desolation of that hour.

Soon the bleeding body of the self-murdered man was borne to the home of his father, but a few blocks away. The young wife and mother, in a darkened room, moaned in the wildest delirium, and sweet Baby Flossie lay a mute sacrifice upon the altar of strong drink.

Later, as Louise, with a heartache she had never before known, sang the sad chant over the little murdered victim, she said down in her heart: "Yes, Emma is right; I, too, hate it! hate it! hate it! I will have nothing to do in all my life with any one at all connected with this horrible evil."

Ah, Louise! It is well for you that Mother Nature gave you, from out her rich storehouse, a will so strong that had you lived in an earlier

day you could have stood unflinchingly, if duty so demanded, amid the pile of lighted fagots, else in the heavy ordeal of the future you had not been able to abide by those words.

When Louise had gone for the summer to Emma's home, it was with the confident expectation of spending the last two weeks at home; but in the coming of the sudden catastrophe new qualities of heart were developed. The stricken family came, in after years, to look back upon those dreadful days and say, "How could we have lived if it had not been for Louise?"

She had that rare faculty that instinctively sees and does the right thing. Her helpfulness was not that obtrusive, bustling kind, which annoys while it helps; but, in her gentleness, she it was who could best soothe, and to Mrs. Ward she came to be a tower of strength.

Poor Mrs. Herron lay for days in delirium, and then settled down into a stony, tearless apathy, from which nothing would arouse her. Her friends feared insanity.

One day, as Louise sat in the music-room, she saw her glide down into the room beyond, and throw herself upon the spot where little Flossie's coffin had stood. Her attitude betokened extreme and hopeless dejection.

Shall I do it?" whispered Louise to herself. "I can but try," and seating herself at the piano, her clear, rich voice rang out:

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee."

Tenderly came the words:

"Leave, O leave me not alone!
Still support and comfort me."

Could it be possible? Yes, the heartbroken woman was sobbing.

In an instant, Louise was with her, pouring forth words of comfort, and gradually she was won back to an interest in life by the sweet power of Christian song.

* * * * *

It was with sorrowing hearts that Mr. and Mrs. Ward watched the train as in the early September it bore Louise and Emma back to school.

They arrived a few hours before the train which was to bring Asbury. How vividly Louise recalled the time when, a year ago, she had come as a stranger. Now it seemed everybody knew her. Grave seniors called out, "All hail!" Professors gave warm greetings, and in the gladness

of her welcome the pangs of homesickness, that she had felt at not being able to see the home-folks, melted away. And then came Asbury, big, brown Asbury, fresh from the farm. Louise thought he had never looked so handsome, he of the broad shoulders, and countenance as free from guile as her own.

Then there were the innumerable questions to be asked.

"Yes, father and mother are well. Father not very strong, though."

Ruth? She and Edward have gone back to the academy. Ruth was taller than her mother, and Edward was almost as tall as his father, and as fond of books as ever. Yes, the new house would be finished in a short time.

O yes; Marie and her husband had just gotten back, and settled down to elegant housekeeping.

Therese had a French music-teacher, who squinted, wore glasses, and, rumor said, made love to his pupils, Therese in particular.

Mr. Newcomb was said to be growing richer; some western speculations had proven especially good. "But I would rather have our own father and mother," said Asbury, "rich as they are in their good qualities, than the wealth of a nabob."

All this, and more, Asbury poured into the ears of his sister.

She had yet one surprise before settling down to study, and that was the sudden arrival of Richard, who had decided to stop on his way back to his college.

How full of joy the hours were! How full of plans for the future—that future which seemed at this juncture unusually bright; for those "western investments" of his father had turned out better than had been feared. Mr. Newcomb had contrived to have a well-written-up "local" concerning the same in the city papers, reading which, more than one said, "Newcomb will pull through yet." "A loss of fortune may mean much to the elderly," Richard reasoned; "but I shall soon have my profession—and Louise," he added, softly.

So, full of hope and good cheer, the lovers parted for the year.

## XIV

## Therese—Bankruptcy

LEAVING the students to become adjusted to another year's work, we again turn to the home-life of the two families. Some of the news so briefly epitomized by Asbury deserves more than passing mention. The year on the farm had been reasonably successful, and while the collegiate course abroad and the academic one at home had entailed extra expense above what each had deposited from his or her "college fund," yet the growing family made such an imperative demand for more room that Rachel and Ruth saw, with extreme satisfaction, the lumber arrive that represented two good front rooms—one with a bay window for Ruth's flowers, and a dining-room, where the reunited family should gather the next summer, and two greatly-needed sunny bedrooms; and in a few days the welcome noise of saws and hammers broke the stillness of the country air.

Ruth and Edward were again in the academy. Ruth was now, as Asbury had said, taller than

her mother. It seemed startling how she had shot up to womanhood. From her earliest childhood she had been of a quiet and loving disposition. The busy, hard-working life the Stevensons led had a tendency in itself to throw each child on its own resources, and particularly the care of the younger children upon the older. Was a little brain puzzled over a lesson? None so patient, so ready to help, as Ruth; indeed, none so capable; for she had the gift of making another understand whatever was plain to her own mind. Since Louise and Asbury had gone, she had become the family reader, and many an evening was made enjoyable as her low, well-modulated voice read from the current literature in which the family were interested; for though the old house had remained small, the library had grown with the family, until now it was of really respectable dimensions, and each book showed marks of frequent reading. There was one work in the collection which marked an epoch in the life of Edward, who, the family laughingly insisted, had gone plant-mad. It all began in a little paragraph which had caught his eye in the early spring, which, in an entertaining way, told its young readers the pleasures of seed-knowledge, suggesting that some seeds be placed to soak,

and the result watched. Edward followed the suggestion, and for a time the various cups and saucers that sat around holding sprouting seeds were a trial to his mother and Ruth. From this simple beginning he had become really well versed in the subject of plant-life.

There was also a volume on mineralogy, which had guided in the gathering of quite a valuable collection of geological specimens.

Fiction was not lacking in this home library; but this was selected with the greatest care, and from the best authors. It was held to have a proper place in the family, perhaps in the ratio of sweetmeats to the staples of the table.

Perhaps the reader asks, "How did this plain, hard-working man and woman come to have such rare taste and judgment in literature and the children such fondness for it?" Does it seem unreasonable? Had Rachel herself been questioned, she would have insisted that it was all the direct outcome of those first quiet evenings, when she and her young husband had read together by the blazing fire, and that their eccentric friend of the camp-ground had builded better than he knew. Then there had been present in all that they read a quiet sermon, pleading for higher education, though of this they had scarcely been

aware, a sort of undercurrent, which bore them most surely on till they had been led to plan for their children's introduction into the fascinating fields to which knowledge is the gateway.

* * * * *

It is high time we were becoming better acquainted with the younger children of this household. Edward was like, and yet unlike, Asbury. There had never been a time when it was not the latter's delight to throw aside his book and help his father in harvesting a load of hay or reaping a field of wheat; but it early became evident that Edward had no such desires. He did his tasks conscientiously, but there was no pleasure to him in the work.

When a task was given him, he hurriedly finished it to get off with a book, and in some quiet spot, perhaps the haymow, he would lie for hours, oblivious of everything else. In this way he followed the conquering Alexander around the world, and read of the triumphs of Cyrus. How he reveled in Irving's "Conquest of Grenada," dreaming by day, if not by night, of old Moorish castles and buried treasures, or became a living companion of Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane!

John often asked Rachel what they would do with the farm when the boys seemed to care more for books than plowing. "But you will be father's right-hand man," he would wind up by saying, as he laid his hand on the sunburnt, honest face of the young John, who now proudly made a "hand" by the side of his father.

* * * * *

"Mother," said Ruth one evening, when, upon her return from school, she had donned a work-apron and was helping about the evening meal, "you have no idea how silly some of the girls are about Monsieur Les Page, the French music-master; and Therese—why, I believe Therese actually imagines herself madly in love with him."

"Impossible!" replied her mother. "Why, she knows nothing of his past life. Besides, he is so much older than she; nearly old enough for her father."

"Well, all that may be true, but she talks of him constantly; and, what is more, I am sure there is a sort of clandestine correspondence between them."

"O, surely not! Therese is young and foolish, I know. Her mind is filled with false ideas, and she doubtless has her 'dreams'—the result of

the world of unreal and morbid fiction in which she has lived; but I do not believe a Newcomb would stoop to anything dishonorable."

Ruth smiled rather incredulously, and continued: "Well, only yesterday, Therese came from her music lesson quite excited, and showed me a closely-written note from the monsieur, which she would allow no one but me to see, and no one to read, saying though, rather triumphantly: 'And Edith Lancaster thinks she is the professor's favorite. O, if she could only read this!'"

A shade of questioning anxiety crossed Mrs. Stevenson's face. "No," she said, softly and sadly to herself, "I would not dare." A wave of remembrance of the old Lynton days had swept over her. Should she go to Margaret with a word of warning? No; Margaret would not brook it. Each woman had chosen her line of action in regard to her own family, and each must abide by the result. Besides, after all, while there might be foolishness, there might be really no danger; for it was getting to be an open secret that the professor was no longer giving satisfaction to the authorities of the academy, and his speedy relief from duty might soon be expected.

The next morning, about an hour after Ruth and Edward had started for the academy, Mrs.

Stevenson caught sight of Ruth coming hurriedly up the lane. Her first thought was of an accident to Edward, and hastily running to meet her, she asked: "Edward? Where is he?"

"O mother!" Ruth almost gasped, "Therese and Monsieur Les Page have gone!"

"Gone?" echoed her mother. "What do you mean?"

Soon she had learned the meager little there was to learn. Therese had gone, the evening before, ostensibly to spend the night with a friend. Not returning the next morning, her family thought nothing of it, supposing she had gone directly to the academy. Early in the morning, however, a startling rumor became current that Monsieur Les Page had quietly left the city during the night. This in itself would not have been at all strange had not rumor further said that he was accompanied by a lady closely veiled. Not one of the Newcomb family would have ever thought of connecting this "veiled lady" with their own Therese; but, going to her room for something, they found it in disorder, and, dropped on the floor by the dresser, lay the tell-tale note from the monsieur—the one which Ruth Stevenson had seen, but not read—in which that base man had indulged in lofty panegyrics concerning

his love for her, and wound up by urging her to fly that very night with him.

And she, poor, foolish child, scarcely in the dawn of womanhood, a child of luxury, tenderly cared for since her birth, had gone out from her home at the bidding of an adventurer, who had proven his baseness by taking advantage of his position to win the love of a romance-fed young girl! Not that he valued this love, but the wealth of Mr. Newcomb more.

To attempt to picture the sorrow, the chagrin, of the family of Therese would be useless. The stricken mother, in an agony of sorrow, entered her own room, closed the shutters, shut out the sunlight and friends, and with closed lips, essayed to bear it alone.

For a week or more, Mr. Newcomb was in almost constant telegraphic communication with Richard, who, in the impetuosity of youth, had flung himself into the search for the missing couple. But however vigorous the search, and however skilled the detectives employed, it really seemed as if the earth had opened and swallowed them up.

Fully a month after their departure there came to Mrs. Newcomb the first ray of light that had penetrated the gloom. It was a letter from

Therese, written from that great human ocean, New York City. She wrote of their marriage—a theatrically-glowing letter, such as one of her cheap heroines might have written—and of her great happiness, and closed with the modest request that her father allow her patrimony! This latter was, of course, a suggestion of the monsieur's, who was clever enough to know what would best help his cause; and he also sent with the letter the legal certificate of that ceremony which had forever linked the life of young, thoughtless Therese Newcomb with his own older and sin-stained one. But thus linked, we must leave them for a time.

* * * * *

Enough cause, and to spare, for anxiety and sorrow; but by no means was this all that tugged, these days, at the weary brain and heartstrings of Mr. Newcomb. From the earliest pages of this story of homes, the business ability of this man has been duly observed. It has been seen, too, that for years he had not been content with the slower, though sure, gains of the great mills which bore his name, but that he had speculated much—now in eastern, now in western stocks; now he became the controlling stockholder in a great rail-

way scheme, or in a mine, whose output promised fabulous returns. It has been further seen that the outside world (which is never, after all, far wrong in its judgments, but which, with its keen eye, takes one's correct measure, mentally, morally, and financially, no matter how closely we hug to our hearts the delusion that we are known only to ourselves) has for some time been shaking its head doubtfully over many of these same speculations. It now becomes proper for us to inquire more closely into the true condition of affairs. It goes without saying that most, if not all, of this speculation was upon borrowed capital, which, as long as the returns were on the right side of the ledger, was all right.

But there came a change. Stocks that he had excepted to rise, suddenly fell, and kept falling, involving great losses. These he tried hard to keep from the prying world, but in this succeeded poorly. The "western investment," the occasion of Richard's western journey the summer before, was a promising mine. This for a time yielded well. But somehow he missed the hour when he might have sold and gained. During these months of anxious struggle, the mills continued prosperous; but in comparison to the larger amounts involved, this was as nothing. It seemed

on every hand that the toils were tightening, and promising ventures melted into thin air.

It may be—indeed, it is more than likely—that the sad fate of his blithe, winsome young daughter was the last touch needed wholly to weaken the strong heart, and to cause the nerveless hand to sink to his side, and the lips to form the hopeless words: "It is no use to struggle further. I may as well yield now."

At any rate, in just three months from the departure of Therese he wrote Richard:

"In another week all will be over, and the world will know me as a bankrupt. God knows, I have tried to avert it, and tried in vain. For myself I do not care; but for the heartache this will cause others, I would, I believe, give my life to ease.

"I have secured to you certain stock (I did this over a year ago), which I trust will be sufficient to enable you to complete the course of study you have begun.

"You will now see, more than you did when I first urged it, how necessary for you to arm yourself with an education and a profession. Years ago, when this trouble first threatened, I secured the home to your mother; indeed, it was really hers from her father, as was the home I gave Marie. What will be the fate of poor Therese, when Les Page learns that she is penniless, I do not know.

"I can struggle no further. I must lay the burden down. Do not come home. Bear this in mind: You are young and strong. It is my greatest comfort to-day to believe that you can succeed where I have failed.

A week later there was an item in the great city papers which announced the failure of William Newcomb, of Burrtonville, owner of large milling interests. But few who glanced over it gave it a thought. "A failure—a mere episode! Men failed every day." But not so with the local press of Burrtonville. His enterprise was enlarged upon, and the regret expressed was sincere; for no one man had contributed more to the growth of their city than he who to-day stood before the world, as he thought, disgraced.

Satisfaction was felt on all sides that the beautiful home, so long one of the local centers of hospitality, was the property of Mrs. Newcomb. All else, Mr. Newcomb had honorably placed in the hands of the creditors.

Mr. Newcomb, after the news had become public and the first stab of disgrace was past, experienced a feeling of relief. The effects of a blow are often easier to be borne than the dread, and if it had not been for the erring Therese and two other facts, William Newcomb might have been happier than he had been for years. One of these was, that his wife had sunk beneath the blow. It had come upon her suddenly, and following her daughter's ill-assorted marriage, it had proven more than she could bear. In a heavily-

curtained upper chamber she was fighting the battle of life and death.

The other reason? Ah! when it obtruded itself into the sick-room or followed the sorrowing man to his couch (and when, during the past years, had it not?) involuntarily he cast his eyes in the direction of the farmhouse, where this very night he knew a peaceful family had gathered, with no other feeling in their hearts than generous compassion for the misfortunes of an old-time friend and neighbor.

Read on, sweet-voiced Ruth! Unconsciously to you, you are the central figure in a sweet home group. Father sits contentedly in his easy-chair; the knitting in mother's hands does not hinder the close attention she always gives when you read. The brothers are grouped near the plain old table. Read on; it will be many a day before this same group will gather so contentedly again.

## XV

# John, the Younger

IT was a blustering wintry day. A heavy snow had lain for weeks on the ground; then had come a warm wind, a few days of sunshine, and it had melted, save a few patches on the hillsides. This had been followed by another freeze, and now, this morning, the winter wind blew across the empty meadows and whistled noisily about the farmhouse.

Ruth and Edward were each at the academy; Rose was at the country school. John, the young prototype of his father, had begged to remain at home, asserting that Madam Blanche, a portly Berkshire dame, needed his assistance in moving her large family of baby Berkshires into better quarters.

After the morning chores, Rachel went, where she was soon joined by her husband, to look over again those wonderful rooms, now ready for occupancy, and into which they expected to move next week.

"How Louise will love this sunny room!" Rachel was saying. "She can share it with Ruth;

and if she brings her friend Miss Ward home with her, we can at least make her comfortable."

"Dear me!" said she, in a reminiscent mood, "how sad was that terrible tragedy in the Ward home!"

"Yes," replied her husband, who was with her, "and think of Newcomb! We have so much to be thankful for, in that sorrow has never yet knocked at our door."

Ah! but dear hearts, have ye not read:

> "Into each life some rain must fall;
> Some days must be dark and dreary?"

Care, such as you have never known, is already close at hand.

Just then, Rachel passed the window. "Why, father, who are those strangers near the barn?"

Looking out, John saw two men walking leisurely about, taking a careful survey of the premises and belongings.

"Probably some men looking for stock. I 'll walk out and meet them."

So saying, he took his hat and started to meet the strangers, and Rachel being left alone busied herself about the dinner.

But the strangers, whoever they were, seemed to have no business with Mr. Stevenson; for by the

time he reached the barn they were letting down the pasture bars and going toward the woodland beyond.

"Father," said younger John impetuously, as they surrounded the supper-table, "who were those two men who were walking over the farm this morning, acting as if they owned it"

"I am sorry I can't tell you," responded his father. "I supposed they were stock men, and went out to see them, but they had gone over toward the woods."

"Well, they came along where I was at work penning up Madam Blanche, and asked me a lot of questions they had no business to. I guess they didn't get much out of me."

"I hope you remembered to be polite," interposed his mother.

"I guess I was polite enough; but when the thin chap with spectacles asked me if there was any mortgage on the place, I told him no; and if there was, I guessed we could pay it."

Ruth and her mother were yet busied with the after-supper work when there came a knock at the door, and from the kitchen Rachel could see the visitors were none other than the two strangers of the morning.

A forboding of evil, she scarcely knew what,

seized her, and both she and Ruth hastened that they might know the import of the strangers' visit.

No need, for in a few minutes her husband, white and trembling, appeared at the door and required her presence. Ruth mutely followed.

"Mother," said John Stevenson, with unconscious, rugged dignity, "this gentleman," indicating a florid, rather large man, evidently ill at ease, "is Mr. Hardin, one of Mr. Newcomb's creditors. This," indicating evidently the "thin chap with spectacles," "is his lawyer, Mr. Nevins. Did you not, years ago, take my message to William Newcomb that I could not longer remain as security with him on the note?"

"Certainly," replied Rachel. "He consented to the change, and assured me the name would be removed at once."

The lawyer took from his pocket a leather book, and from its folds took out a yellow bit of paper. With a blur over his eyes, John Stevenson read the fateful words:

"I promise to pay the sum of ten thousand dollars with interest from date," etc. Signed. There was the pen flourish of Mr. Newcomb, and the unmistakable, cramped, plain "John Stevenson;" and the flourished "William Newcomb" was as worthless as the yellow paper on which it was written!

A moment of choking stillness followed. The old clock on the high wooden mantel ticked on loudly and bravely, as if it would fain avert the coming disaster.

The hickory fire that glowed in the great fireplace snapped and sputtered, but the living actors in this home tragedy stood or sat like figures of carved marble.

John Stevenson looked in mute appeal into the faces of the two men, both of whom were fidgeting and moving around in an uneasy manner; but there was no pity, no relenting. They were there to have their "pound of flesh."

"There must be some awful mistake," almost gasped Rachel. "Certainly, William Newcomb could not be guilty of this awful crime. He told me, when I took the message, that the note was then in a bank, placed as collateral; that he would redeem it at once, by depositing in its stead certain stock; and upon my second visit, he assured me it had been done. O that friendship had not blinded me, and I had asked myself to see the note destroyed!"

Ruth, with clenched hands, was crying piteously as she leaned with one arm over her father's chair. Edward stood in silent wonder; but no one had noticed the fiery young John, who suddenly

sprang to his feet, and with eyes blazing like coals and a face with the pallor of death, save for the rugged tan, placed himself in front of his father and said:

"Father, what does all this mean? What right have these men," and boy as he was they were forced to wince at the scorn in his voice, "to come here and annoy you?"

"It means, my son," and the father's voice seemed as if the heartache of a lifetime was crowded into a second, "that years ago, for old friendship's sake, I became security to William Newcomb for a sum of money which, with the interest, will take every foot of ground belonging to the farm to pay. He assured me at the time he would only need my signature for a year, and afterwards assured your mother that it was paid."

"O the scoundrel! But it is n't right, it is n't just. Think how they have lived, while we have worked hard day after day! Go!" and he turned in youthful fury to the two men, and flung wide open the outside door. "Let the Newcomb's pay their own debts."

The men arose to leave, glad to escape from an interview so embarrassing, preferring to leave their cause to the surer officers of the law.

Both the father and mother were so over-

whelmed with this calamity that they scarcely realized John's brusque speech, and were only too glad to be left alone.

Long they sat and talked; but talking brought little relief, only serving to emphasize the direful fact more plainly that William Newcomb had made a promise to Rachel which he had not fulfilled.

"O!" moaned Rachel, "if I only had not trusted him—had insisted on seeing for myself that the note was paid as he said!"

And now for this, her mistake, they were to be homeless. Carefully she recalled every incident of her call at the Newcomb office. Mr. Newcomb had told her again, what she already knew, that "the money thus secured had been used as an investment in the rapidly-changing financial scenes in the early days of the war; it had brought good returns, and had been invested again and again." Yes, he had admitted it had been an act of business carelessness that the original note had not been paid. As she desired, he "would write a check that very day."

And she had believed him! For herself she did not care so much; but there were the years of hardships borne by her husband. He had never been strong since the hour of the accident. No, he could never make his way again.

The afternoon wore away, night came; though they retired, neither could sleep. There were the children! Rachel sobbed as she thought of them. It was true, each had his own college fund. How she blessed the writer of the stray paragraph which had contained the suggestion! Yet unless it was annually added to, it would prove insufficient. Would they finally have to give up and come home?

Following these sad reflections came the thought: "Asbury is the Lord's own. He will care for him someway."

Ah! if that is true of Asbury, why not of Louise, of Ruth, of each one? God's own are not all ministers. He will have his servants in all walks of life, and the first prayer that had crossed her lips, now rose for sustaining grace to bear this trial if it came.

God is always waiting, longing to comfort if asked, and even as she prayed, peace came.

They were all the Lord's. He was pledged to care for them. The word, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," still stood, and David's experience as recorded, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," might be hers if she would grasp it. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him." Aye! she had done this. Now

came the harder act of faith, to believe that He would bring to pass that which was best.

Reaching out her hand—ah! it had long been wrinkled and hard—she clasped the still browner one of her husband, and whispered: "John, be comforted. God reigns, and he will care for us."

"O!" groaned John, "it was our own foolish act, and God can not save us from the effects of such. We should not have allowed the years to pass without knowing that what Newcomb had promised was done."

"But God can and will help us bear it," she urged, and so comforted, after a weary while, they slept.

Before the old farm-horn had blown the dinner summons the following day, two things had happened. One was an interview on the part of John Stevenson with the man who had so cruelly wronged him, where he learned the truth of his worst fears. Yet he had come away with a queer feeling akin to pity for the wretched man; for he said to himself, "I can stand before the world an honest, if it must be, a penniless man, and there is a world of satisfaction in a clear conscience."

And it was true, William Newcomb was an object of pity; for over and over again he had learned the gruesome, unwelcome lesson that the way of

the transgressor is always hard. For months he had been cowering before the hour when the Stevensons must know of his dishonesty.

At first he had not dreamed of a dishonest act. He had fully expected to cancel the note, even before Rachel's visit, and certainly to fulfill his promise to her; but even then the web of entanglements had begun to enwrap him, and as fate would have it, on the very day of her call, news reached him of the sudden decline in price of grain, which he had contracted for in large quantities. "Well, the very next week I will do it," was the promise he made his conscience when his last available check was given, not to free the farm-folk, but other more clamorous creditors.

But affairs were no better "next week," and so he had lived on, the note becoming the property of a bank, whose managers were wise to recognize the value of the plain, cramped signature. During the last five years he had not entered upon a speculation without promising himself to redeem the hated note with the margin, but it had been impossible. Thus often do the results of our actions widely exceed our intentions.

During the interview, he had sat cowed and shrunken. Where was the old-time alertness, the ready joke, the hearty good-fellowship? Yes, such

are to be pitied "who sow to the wind, for of the wind they shall reap destruction." Thinking this, John Stevenson left him to his own sad thoughts.

How misspent now seemed the years that had been given solely to the getting of wealth! How fatal the mistake that had made him merely a "source of supply for his family!" He groaned aloud as thoughts of his children intruded. Could he hope, dare he hope, for Richard, handsome Richard, though possessing talents that ought to make him a leader among his fellows? He acknowledged now, in those hours of bitterness, that the whole bent of his boy's training had been such it would be nigh impossible for him to resist the temptations with which he was surrounded.

And Therese, blithe, headstrong Therese, there could be nothing but sorrow and failure in her life. And Marie? Perhaps here was a grain of comfort.

No! He frowned. Who could feel pride in a vapid society woman? And to crown his sorrow, upstairs lay the mother, his beautiful Margaret, tossing in delirium, not yet conscious of the loss that had come to their old-time friends. We repeat, he was to be pitied.

When John Stevenson arrived home after the interview, he learned of the second event we have mentioned. A legal notice had been served, de-

manding the immediate payment of the note and the interest from date.

Why go over the details of those trying days? Rachel's strength of character had never been tested till now. With her own hand she penned a letter bearing the terrible news to Asbury and Louise, telling them to remain at college for the present, that their presence at home would not help.

To her husband she became a tower of strength. When he would have sunk, she comforted him by reminding him that the family were well-nigh grown; but somehow, food and shelter and the equally pressing needs of an education would be supplied.

No one guessed the tempest that raged in the heart of sixteen-year-old John. Of all the children, none loved the farm as he. While Asbury had dreamed of a pulpit, and Edward had followed a conquering hero around the world, John had found *his* study out under the blue sky. He knew every foot of ground, and could give the name and history of each and every animal about the place. A flock of sheep "ba-a-a-ed" at the pasture bars each night; to each one he had given a name, and it had been with impatience he had listened to the statement "that all sheep looked alike." To give up the farm, and under such circumstances! With

swelling heart he determined to see Mr. Newcomb himself. "Father's too easy," the children had often said.

Soon chance favored his purpose; for he was sent to Burrtonville on an errand, and once there lost no time in making his way to the Newcomb residence. The angry blood surged through his veins as he trod the beautiful, well-kept lawn, and beheld the elegant luxury of the home. A servant answered the bell, and went to call Mr. Newcomb. "No, he could not be seen."

"But tell him I *must* see him," said John. Again word was brought back that he could not be seen.

"Where is he?" asked John.

"In his wife's room," replied the servant. John walked out as if leaving, and the servant went back to her work.

He well knew each room of the great house, and little thinking of the sick one, he turned and sought the room where he knew Mr. Newcomb was. Soon his low knock summoned the surprised man to the door.

## XVI

## A Visit—A Result—Leaving the Farm

"I HAD to see you," explained John, who swallowed back the involuntary pity which rose as he caught sight of the haggard man.

"It is a part of my punishment," the tired man said to himself, as he wearily led the way to a room where, since his trouble, he had kept some of his papers.

"Well?" he said interrogatively, as the door closed behind them.

As the boy had gone about the farm yesterday, and as he had ridden in this evening, he had longed to meet the author of their trouble face to face. How he would upbraid him! Ah! he had felt as if he only lacked opportunity to meet him; but as he beheld the pinched face, somehow the invectives died on his lips.

Yet a glance upon the elegant appointments of the room recalled him. "He ought to sell this, part with every comfort; for the debt was his." All this passed through his mind almost before the echo of the questioning "well?" had died away.

"I came to ask," and the sunburned face of this boy, clad in his working clothes, shone with the righteousness of his request, "if you would do nothing to save my father and mother from being homeless, all for friendship to you?"

"I would gladly do it if I could, but I can not," and there was a hopeless ring in his voice.

"But it is so monstrous, so unjust," and the boy's face flushed at the thought. "Can you sit here in this home, with all this about you?" and he swept his hand to indicate the luxurious surroundings. "Can you allow Marie to retain her home, and see my father, now growing old, lose that for which he has worked through these long years, for you?"

Mr. Newcomb was silent, then said, " I can not control Marie's home. Once I might; not now."

"But this home," persisted John, "you can easily sell it."

Said Mr. Newcomb, with a touch of impatience in his voice: "Boy! this one debt for which your father is security is but one of many. If I would sell this home and all its belongings, it would not pay the thousandth part."

Poor John began to realize the hopelessness of his appeal. "But surely there is something you can do; something left of all your great property."

"Nothing; all is in the hands of the creditors." Then he half started, as if a sudden remembrance had come to him.

"Then, Mr. Newcomb," and John drew himself up, "I call you to remember there is a God, and he is the God of my father and mother," and with that he left the presence of the man who had caused so much trouble in his home.

The youth paused for a moment in his homeward ride. Before him stretched the loved acres of his childhood's home—his no longer. Back of him, on the banks of the Illinois, towered the great mill, which had been such a source of wealth to its owner.

"Well, old farm, go from us for a time if you will, but some day I 'll win you back! Yes, and more," and, through the not unmanly tears, he looked squarely at the mill, which was just now being lighted by the evening sun. Then touching Beauty he cantered home.

William Newcomb watched the boyish figure as it recklessly strode down the graveled walk.

"Yes, it is hard for them," he said, softly. "Could I buy peace of conscience if I gave them the deed to the one thing left me? So poor, that the hungry creditors did not care to bother with it. Those acres of arid waste in Arizona; I thought

they would have yielded me gold. 'T was but another bubble. At any rate, they shall see that I have done all that I could."

So saying he went to a drawer, drew out an envelope, and, with a few strokes of the pen, made John Stevenson the owner of a tract of desert land in Arizona.

Putting it into an envelope, he wrote a note to John Stevenson, telling him he hoped that in the years to come he would thing differently of him.

Just then a servant called him to his wife's bedside.

She was dying!

About the hour that the Stevensons received William Newcomb's communication, they also received the news that Margaret, his wife, had passed beyond the pale of human praise or censure.

"No, it is worthless, absolutely worthless; you may as well toss it into the open grate." John Stevenson, like a drowning man catching at a straw, had gone to a lawyer, asking him to accept for the debt the deed of the Western land, and received for reply the above answer.

With a heavy heart he turned to leave. Suddenly a sense of the hopelessness of his cause swept over him, and a despair he had not known seized him, and in a moment the worthless paper,

which had brought him this fresh disappointment, lay upon the smoldering coals of the grate.

So burdened was he that he did not observe that his youngest son, who had accompanied him, as quickly stooped, and removing it from its perilous position, placed it in his own pocket. But the lawyer did, and smiled at the boy's independence of action as well as at the shrewdness displayed.

Rachel awaited his return, and read the result of his visit in his face.

It was, "We must find another home!" In after years they wondered how they ever lived through the trying days.

Added to the thought of leaving their home was the pertinent query, Where should they turn? What should they do? It had been hard to make a living on the farm, to rent one seemed a doubtful experiment.

It was found that while they would lose the farm, they would be able to keep the stock.

These it was decided to sell, and if possible get a home in Burrtonville. And then, how should they live? This question both Rachel and John turned over again and again in their minds.

Jerome Mills was a member of the same Church as the Stevensons, and was the grocer in Burrtonville with whom the family had always dealt.

He was possessed of a great longing to live in the country, which desire became intensified by the sight of golden rolls of butter, the baskets of fresh eggs, and other farm produce, which Rachel was wont to bring in each week in exchange for groceries.

Hearing from Lawyer Nevins that the Stevenson farm was to be rented, he at once went to see if they could not make a trade.

They soon arrived at a conclusion. The stock, excepting that belonging to the children, should remain on the farm, the property of Mr. Mills, while the Stevensons should take his grocery business and rent his house—an untried venture; still, it might prove successful.

John Stevenson was not a man to delay matters; so when he abandoned all hope, he at once made preparations for the inevitable, and a few days later two large wagons stood in the grassy lane, into which the household effects were packed.

Poor Rachel! But a month ago, with a light heart, she had planned to move into the new rooms; but now strangers would enjoy the comfort she had never known! Yet it was not for these she most sorrowed. Here, in the great kitchen, at the table, the merry group of boys and girls had gathered and spent the meal-time in laughter and repar-

tee. Here, about this hearth, her little children had played. In that little bedroom, Asbury had been converted. But why call up the past?

Like as unto the Israelites of old the command had come to go forward, she could trust that now, as then, there would be a pillar of fire to lead; so without a tear (for her husband's sake), brave Rachel Stevenson went out from the home of her early wifehood and motherhood.

All were ready to go; but the boy John could nowhere be found.

Guided by a mother's instinct, Rachel went herself to the barn, and there in the manger of Beauty's stall, with his arms about the wondering animal's neck, poor John was giving way to the wild abandonment of grief.

The sight moved his mother as nothing else, and, putting her arms about him, they wept together. But time moves inexorably on and pays little heed to tears, and the pawing teams were ready to start; so at last they rose to go, when John, every inch a hero, even in his blue shirt and cotton pants, said, "I 'll have it back, every acre of it—*every acre of it!*"

A few days after they had gotten settled, they were surprised by a call from the director of what had been their home-school. He soon made his

errand known. It was, that their township had requested the services of Ruth to teach the spring school. This young lady at first demurred on account of fancied inability, but yielded, and erelong seemed to have found her niche in the plain little schoolroom.

Edward remained in the academy, while John found enough to keep him busy helping his father get adjusted to the new work of the store.

Like a patient mother-bird that sees its nest broken and despoiled, yet patiently goes to work to repair the breach, so this other mother began the work of building a new home, under surroundings so different from the past.

The task was not so hard after all; for had they not each other? And it was with genuine sorrow that they thought of the lonely man in the great house, who weeks before had sadly followed his beautiful Margaret out from the door of her luxurious home to the stillness of the grave.

Richard had come to his mother's burial, and after coming home from the last sad rites, he learned for the first time of the Stevenson's loss. He was shocked, overwhelmed, and felt this more than the loss of his father's entire fortune.

How could Louise forgive this? Would not the very name of Newcomb be the synonym for every-

thing despicable? How he longed in the few days of his stay to go to the farmhouse and express his sympathy and sorrow, but he durst not! He resolved, though, as it seemed best for him to finish his collegiate year, that on his return he would stop at the university, and learn his fate from the lips of her who, now that such sorrows had swept in on him, seemed all that was left of life.

His heart—yes, and his pride—mourned for Therese; for she had been his favorite. He could have borne without a murmur the mere loss of property; for youth is strong, brave, and hopeful. But then came the death of his mother, that beautiful, gracious being whose life had been the one question, "What will make my children most happy?"

She may have erred in answering the question; but kindness, love, and gentleness had marked her rule, and over her coffin, Richard first tasted the bitterness of sorrow.

It would be hard to depict the sorrow, the indignation, and the anxiety which both Asbury and Louise carried in their hearts in these days.

To give up the home, the fruit of honest toil, for another, and to go out into the world well-nigh penniless! Imagination refused to take in the thought that now, at this very time, the family were

leaving the old home. Each felt that to remain in school was out of the question. If they were home, surely they might help in some way. This they wrote.

Promptly came the message from father and mother: "The one bit of silver lining to this cloud is, that you are each so nearly ready for your life-work. If you love us, stay where you are, and make the most of each day. This thought will bear us up as nothing else will."

The wisdom of this was apparent. But they could scarcely study harder than before; for they were already among the best of the university.

As Louise was going to her room from recitation one day, about a week after the receipt of the news from home, a note was handed to her. It read:

"LOUISE,—I have been to my mother's burial. I can not go back to school without seeing you. You have a right to hate our very name; but will you not see me? RICHARD."

Louise read, wondering: "Could it be? His mother dead, and he in town? And he thinks I blame him. Poor, unhappy Richard! No! What had he to do with this? Nothing." And with a longing to look into his face, she wrote:

"DEAR RICHARD,—Come."

An hour later, these two, the current of whose lives had flown together since childhood, and which in these later years had been indissolubly knit together in that strange tie, stronger than death itself, which, for lack of a better word, we call "love," were together.

Richard had been moved deeper than he knew by the sad succession of events of the past few weeks, and it was no unmanly thing that, on catching sight of the bright, true face so dear to him, and just now radiant with the divine light of sympathy, he should sink into a chair and weep again, as he had over his mother's coffin.

Then began the divine ministry of woman's love to bind up the bruised and broken-hearted.

Tenderly she drew from him the story of his mother's death, of which she had not heard. With tact she made him understand that she imputed no intentional wrong to the sorrowing father, who now was certainly an object of pity to the most careless.

With a hope she hardly dared feel, she pictured the future of her own father and mother, and urged him to make the most of himself by making the most of the remaining months in college.

How she longed to ask him if in these sorrows he had gone to the great Source of comfort! But

she remembered that if such matters were not actually scoffed at, they were held with indifference by members of the Newcomb home.

Well, in later years, he should learn and share her own sweet faith!

Foolish Louise! A thousand unhappy wives would bear testimony to the futility of that hope.

Listening to her, Richard felt his dejection slipping away. Yes, life was still rich; for it held Louise.

He told her how, in another year, he would enter a law-office. "And, Louise," said he, "believe me, my first care shall be to see that this loss of yours shall be made good."

As he read in her eyes the devotion of her heart, a great sense of shame swept over him that he was not more worthy of her. Looking into her eyes, how easy seemed the right! how disgusting the wrong!

He was not going until a late evening train. There was to be an open-meeting of the literary society to which Louise belonged, and to change the sad drift of his thoughts she insisted that he attend. She had promised a song for the occasion, and for more than a week had been practicing the high, warbling notes of a solo in a new popular opera. Scarcely had the last note died away when

the vigorous prolonged *encore* gave her the opportunity she had coveted, and the rich clear voice took up that blessed hymn of comfort which has soothed so many sorrowing ones, "Come, ye disconsolate." As she sang,

**"Earth has no sorrow that heaven can not heal,"**

little wonder that the company listened in awe at the pathos; for with every note there was a prayer that her lover might test this truth for himself. Sitting there, unconscious of the prayer, Richard resolved to do this very thing, and from this very hour to live an earnest Christian life. Alas! had it not been for Braceton; alas! had it not been for the inexorable reaping from the sowings of the past.

## XVII

## Getting Settled—Life in a College Club

SPRINGTIME had come, and other hands than the Stevensons' were sowing the home acres. It is always hard for a man late in life to change his business. It was doubly so for John Stevenson.

Brought up on a farm, spending his life there, in that place he was at home; but as for a "store," he felt out of place, awkward, having scarcely any adaptability for it. But something had to be done, and this had seemed to be the "something" that offered.

If this were true of himself, it was hardly so with the boys. Edward had remained in the academy, it being his last year; but there were the long mornings and evenings, which he took largely to familiarize himself with the new business, and gradually the whole of the book-keeping fell into his hands.

John became in this new business his father's most valued helper. At first he chafed at the confinement, and groaned in his soul as he longed to be on the farm again. But he soon began to develop genuine business instinct, and, young as he

was, his father learned to rely upon him as the purchaser of supplies. Known to all his acquaintances as a man of sterling honesty, having their sympathy in his loss, it was not strange that customers flocked to the new venture, and that erelong the mere question of an honest living was assured.

Nor did the wife find the task of adjusting herself to the new home a difficult one. It will be remembered, the coveted new rooms at the farmhouse had been unoccupied. The Mills' home was a new and well-built cottage, with much more room and many more conveniences than she had known. "But, alas!" thought both she and her husband, "to live in a home that is not our own!"

Yet the home-touches were not long in asserting themselves, nor the living-room in taking on a cozy home-air. There were two good-sized southern windows, which, before many months, what with hanging vines and blooming flowers, were marvels of beauty. Between these were arranged the shelves for books. And from these, their old, worn friends—the books of the years' gathering—soon greeted them, and their greeting seemed well-nigh human. Ah! they had not lost all. Indeed, though everything else should have been swept away, the past, with its rich associations, was forever theirs. And with that past, indeed one of its

strongest factors, were these same silent friends, who had now followed them into the uncertainties of the present.

In a corner of the room, Edward's individual tastes asserted themselves. In a cabinet of his own making, with a plain glass front, was his collection of botanical specimens. One more deeply skilled than he might have called many of these worthless; but in their broadening, educating influence upon the boy himself, in the sweet spell which their collecting had thrown over him, keeping him from possible rude associates, and in opening to him the riches of nature, one would have been slow to pronounce the most insignificant as worthless.

Accustomed on the farm to much "outside work," the home-keeping in the Mills' home seemed a very light affair, and it was well; for the years, together with the events of the last few months, were telling plainly on the strong factor of the whole, the house-mother.

As for the college students, it had been hard for them to remain at their post amid all these harrowing changes; but the home commands were imperative. Yet each felt something must be done. But what? Asbury's expenses were already at a minimum, thanks to the student club of which he was a member; but Louise, with Emma, had found

a delightfully congenial home, which had opened its doors to the students, and where she had remained during her entire stay in the college. But why should she not try Asbury's plan? That which she most dreaded was the losing of Emma's sweet companionship; for without the slightest need for economy, there would be little use for her to take any discomfort upon herself.

Among the worshipers at the same church with Louise was a very tall, angular woman, with that peculiar snappy kind of black eyes which seem to be continually upon the lookout for a fault. Her husband had grown tired of life years before, and left her with the care of a large family, all girls, and a bit of property in the country. She had sold her country property and invested in an old, rambling house in the town, whose only recommendation was the great number of rooms it contained. She had hoped to earn her livelihood in the time-honored way of keeping boarders; but there were so many cheery homes open, was it any wonder the students passed by this sharp-visaged woman and her roomy house? Her latest ambition had been to organize a "girl's club," whereby college expenses might be considerably lessened for girls as well as their brothers. Indeed, at the time when Louise began to cast about for a plan

to economize, a small club of the kind was already in operation.

Perhaps it may be as well to state here that, owing to the wise foresight of her father in his plan for the "college fund," this was fortunately not necessary, yet, with the air of a martyr, Louise went on a tour of inspection, feeling very grand and self-sacrificing. The outlook at Mrs. Hoyson's (the club manager) seemed dreary enough, even for the most pronounced martyrdom; but this suited her present mood better than sunshine and cheer, and as she might have signed her own death-warrant she made the arrangements for the change.

There remained yet one task, itself of no small magnitude, and that was to acquaint Emma with her decision.

That evening the girls were sitting in their cozy room, apparently busy in the lessons for the next day. After Louise had gotten up the seventh time to punch a fire that was already glowing brightly, and had walked several times to the window and beaten a tattoo on the panes, Emma tossed her book aside and said: "You might as well out with it, whatever it is. Have you, in a sudden gust of passion, murdered some one, and is the wraith making you uncomfortable? Come, unburden your

heart to the one that loves you." Emma had struck a mock-heroic attitude, and seemed to be listening intently for a confession she expected would chill the very marrow in her bones.

Louise smiled, a kind of wan smile, it must be admitted. How she began and how she ended she never knew. But in some way or other an idea of the proposed change began at length to dawn upon Emma, and really, if the "marrow" was not frozen as she had expected, she was quite as much excited as if such an event had really occurred.

"Can it be possible," thought she, "that the old, sweet companionship is to be broken up?" No, never; and greatly to the surprise of Louise, after her excited room-mate had taken two or three turns about the room, she stopped squarely in front of her and announced her intention of accompanying her. A swift vision of the plain, meagerly-furnished room she had just secured passed rapidly before her, and mentally she contrasted it with the luxurious one in Emma's own home. Then there was the vinegarnish Mrs. Hoyson, the new landlady. Louise wearily acknowledged to herself that in all probability herein would lie the greatest trial of the new life. No, Emma must not make this sacrifice; thus much she said, but Emma remained firm.

"Now you need not say a word; my mind is fully

made up. Let me tell you something. Do you remember last summer, at one of the meetings of the Missionary Band, Mrs. Millionaire was urging us to exercise self-denial in our gifts, showing so plainly that the Lord took a special delight in such giving? I remember to have felt a sense of shame that in all my life I had not known what it was really to do without something I wanted in order to get money to give. Now here is my opportunity. I will go with you to the club, and every dollar so saved (and I will keep an exact account) shall go to that new mission in the interior of China. Now it is settled. You are not to have a monopoly of heroics on self-sacrifice."

And so it was. A few days later found the friends unpacking their "penates," as in school-girl fashion they styled their trunks, and a few other belongings, in one of the grim, bare rooms belonging to Mrs. Hoyson.

A square of rag-carpet ornamented the floor of this room, while a bed, a washstand, a plain table, and two chairs comprised the furniture. The windows were small, and nearer the ceiling than the floor. The views from neither were inspiring. In front, some busy men, in a cooper-shop, kept up a rat-tat-tat on some barrels the whole day long, while from the rear the view was excellent of a

cemetery about a block away. Far from this being an occasion of worrying, however, it became the subject of many an odd remark from Emma; and notwithstanding the dreariness of the place, not a day passed without the sound of happy girlish laughter. Looking back upon their college lives in after years, two sober women, each seriously intent upon performing the duties with which their lives became singularly full, were wont to smile as episode after episode of this happy—supremely *funny* —club-life was recalled.

If Mrs. Hoyson had one feature predominant above another, that feature was neatness. Her white aprons were always smooth and glossy in their stiffness, and woe to the unlucky roomer who left things "lying around." Emma and Louise took turns in "straightening." One morning, it being Emma's turn (Louise was at her practice), that young lady concluded she would hurry up her fire, and took some oil from the lamp to do so. Great was her dismay to find a large oil-spot on the floor. What would Mrs. Hoyson say? Now, Emma really knew nothing of housework, and as she stood contemplating the spot, "Why not burn it off," something seemed to suggest. Well, in the next minute she learned a thing or two about how *not* to remove a grease spot. The "fire" was promptly

put out, but not until the girls had gathered from the different rooms, with Mrs. Hoyson, grim and severe, at their lead. Poor Emma! she hardly knew which was most to be dreaded, the "O my's" of the girls, or the stony displeasure of Mrs. Hoyson.

The plan of the present campaign of economics was, that there should be one of their number who, in her turn, should do the purchasing of supplies, and it became a matter of rivalry to see which could bring their expenses down to the lowest possible figure, and yet maintain a good bill of fare. However, it became tacitly understood, if either of these points was to be sacrificed, the uncomplaining latter should be the victim. That year, as if to get ready for such emergencies, nature had sent a bountiful crop of potatoes, and never before had either Louise or Emma dreamed of the possibilities of this one mealy, jacketed tuber.

It became quite an experience with Emma to go, with pencil and note-book in hand, and with an air of importance, make the acquaintance of grocers and butchers, and exchange animated remarks upon the lowest possible price of vegetables or meat, and none learned quicker than she the possibilities of a soup-bone or the satisfying qualities of a breakfast of batter-cakes.

This last knowledge came from a remark of Mrs. Hoyson herself, with whom Emma was arranging the breakfasts for her week, and discussing the merits of the various breakfast-dishes proposed, always of course with an eye to economy. Mrs. Hoyson, to help matters along, ventured the remark, with her peculiar nasal drawl, and without much regard to grammar or pronunciation, "You 'd better try pancakes; pancakes is mighty fillin'." This, Emma, with her inimitable sense of humor, related for the benefit of the club, and pancakes became the order of the day.

Having tasted the sweets of economy, Emma began to carry it into her private expenses, as the following will show: They were all seated at the table, when Louise happened to remark, "I wish we had a barrel of apples, say of Belleflower or of Winesaps, from the home orchard."

"O dear!" returned Emma, "apples are dreadful dear! I priced some on the way to school this morning, and they were three for a dime. I wanted some so badly, though, I told the boy I would take *five cents' worth.*" A peal of laughter followed this announcement, and it took Emma a whole minute to discover that there was anything funny in the proposed purchase of half an apple. "No wonder that the boy looked perplexed and busied

himself with another customer," she admitted to herself.

A full account of all these exploits, Emma "wrote up" in her weekly letter home. At first, these letters were a source of great amusement, and much interest was felt in "Emma's latest freak." After a while, however, the fear came that perhaps, for the sake of health, the girls were carrying the matter too far; and so, upon the receipt of the apple episode, done up in Emma's most melodramatic manner, Mrs. Ward said emphatically: "Well, I have wanted to visit Emma for a long time. I am going at once."

A few days after, as the girls were sitting down to one of their plainest dinners, they were greatly surprised by seeing a cab drive up, and in another moment, Emma was in her mother's arms. It did not take that lady long to decide that both Emma and Louise would be better off back in their old cozy home. Mr. Ward sent a message to the effect that he would see that Mrs. Millionaire and the mission did not suffer in this decision. Louise concurred, with a bit of exultation in her heart, it must be confessed. Besides, had she not had an "experience" as well as the home-folks?

## XVIII

# An Oratorical Contest—Sad Ending

IN pleasanter quarters the year passed, and never perhaps had more genuine hard work been done. Commencement-week was hastening; but preceding this by a fortnight an event was to occur in which the interest of all centered.

Their university was a member of an intercollegiate oratorical association, and had been chosen as the place where representatives of the different colleges should meet and contest for the honor of supremacy.

With a thrill of pride, Louise received from Richard the message that he had been chosen to represent his college. Ah, if he should win! And her blood hasted and her cheeks glowed as she imagined him the hero of the occasion. Little else than the contest was talked of. At length the day came.

As the representatives from the different colleges began to gather, it was easy to see that they were all picked men, the pride of their institutions. Many were accompanied by some of their particu-

lar friends, who desired to witness the success, as each one hoped, of their "man."

Among them came Richard Newcomb, who lost no time in calling upon her for whose sake he was most anxious to succeed. From him, Louise learned that a company of his friends, among whom was a Mr. Braceton, had accompanied him.

The next few hours seemed like a dream, they were so full of feverish anxiety. At length came the packed hall, the flutter of college colors, the din of college yells, and then the genuine eloquence of each contestant.

Presently a clear, rich, well-modulated voice began. Ah; how well Louise knew each tone! See, the audience is growing still, is bending to listen.

The chosen theme is one that touches the heart, and the great heart of the audience responds as the earnest, impassioned sentences fall from the speaker's lips.

The orator at length sits down amid a storm of applause. There were others yet to speak; but Louise felt that her lover had won, and it was true.

Later the prize was given to him, a lovely silvered head of the great Demosthenes, crowned with a golden crown of laurel, the latter of such

fine and beautiful workmanship that the delicate leaves seemed to quiver before the slightest breeze. Louise could not trust herself to offer the customary congratulations before so many curious eyes.

Leaving a message with Asbury to the effect that she and her room-mate, Miss Ward, would call in the morning, she quickly sought the privacy of her room.

In the after years of her life she was wont to look back upon the delirious joy of that evening as of an experience in the life of another, one of whom perhaps she had read, so far away and unreal did it come to seem.

Her first thought on awakening the next morning was, "Richard has won!" How proud she felt of him! What might she not expect from the future, in which the world must recognize his ability?

In front of her window stood a great tree, always a favorite trysting-place for robins and the other birds of the locality. As she threw open the sash, she noticed a robin swaying to and fro on one of the topmost boughs. As she looked, she saw him throw back his head, and in an ecstasy of delight burst into such a flood of melody that the quiet stillness of the morning seemed suddenly to become one great anthem of praise. This accorded well

with her own present emotions, and she said softly to herself, "The bird is not happier than I."

The song finished, the happy songster flew up yet a little higher, and perched upon another limb, not yet leaving the shady tree. Suddenly there was a whirr from a bow and arrow in the hands of a neighbor's boy, and his sweet song was hushed forever.

Shocked, and with her heart filled with pity at the tragedy, she hastened to where he lay gasping; but as she stroked the ruffled plumage, there was no voice to whisper that her own happiness might be wrecked as quickly.

As she knew that in all probability many would call at the victor's rooms during the morning, she arranged that hers should be as early as possible, and so, as the silvery chimes of ten o'clock rang out, she, with Asbury and Emma, started for the hotel where he was stopping.

Let us for a moment go back to the victor. Flushed with excitement, congratulated on all sides, the idol for the time of the college friends who had accompanied him, Richard Newcomb went to his rooms happier, having lately known such sorrow, than he could have dreamed possible.

Students from the different colleges began to gather in his room and offer congratulations.

Later, when the number had narrowed down to perhaps a half dozen, Braceton suggested that they should celebrate the victory in some sort of style.

Richard demurred. More than once in Braceton's own room he had gone beyond the bounds, and none knew as well as he the danger that menaced him. But Braceton insisted, and finally a bottle of champagne was brought.

"No, no! not here!" Richard said, as the sparkling glass was handed him.

At this arose a laugh,—a laugh which was decisive. It is easier for some to stand before a bullet than before a laugh. So the glass was drained; then another. Other bottles were brought, and soon the walls echoed with foolish laughter and jest.

With the second draught, all control of himself passed from young Newcomb. Gone were the memories of a mother's death, a father's trouble; gone even the memory of Louise; and not until the early dawn did he fall into a drunken stupor, dressed as he had come from the hall, and so he was lying when Louise crossed the threshold.

The parlors of this hotel were on the second floor, and the room Richard and Braceton occupied was only a door distant.

On the arrival of the visitors the porter knocked

at the door, and handed the card to Braceton, who had answered. (It was a peculiarity that the drink that would affect the quick, nervous brain of Newcomb, Braceton would hardly feel.)

As he took the card, he read aloud the name. Was it the magic of the name that broke the drunken stupor? At any rate, Richard slowly arose, looked wildly around, saying, "Where am I?"

"Pull yourself together, old fellow," said Braceton. "You have callers that I think you would like to see, though you had better say you 're out till you 're in better shape."

"What do you say?" and as he seized the delicate card in his hand, somehow, through the befogged brain, was borne the fact that Louise was waiting, and without a moment's hesitation he started to go to her.

Perceiving this, Braceton took hold of him to hold him back. Then came the sound of a thick, incoherent, angry voice, echoes of which floated over the open transom into the parlors. Emma started, and Louise grew pale with apprehension.

Suddenly the door opened, and in walked Richard, with hair wildly disheveled, eyes bloodshot, his whole attire bespeaking a night's carousal.

Muttering something in an incoherent, unsteady manner, he essayed to walk across the room to

where Louise sat, the strong odor of wine preceding him.

Like a flash upon the startled girl came the memory of that dreadful night when Baby Flossie lay dying, and a drunken husband had ended his own miserable life; and with this flash came a realizing sense of Richard's condition.

With a low moan, and a startled, appealing glance toward Asbury and Emma, she fled through the open door.

O! to be home, to be in her own room, to be anywhere, that she might hide her shame and disgrace!

A few minutes later, returning homeward, she entered the gateway, and just by the door the body of the dead robin still lay. Mechanically she stopped as she said, "O! little bird, I am brought as low as you; your happiness is not more surely ended than is mine."

Passing to her room, the disgrace of the scene she had so recently witnessed well-nigh overwhelmed her. With it came the conviction, slow but sure, that the various whispered rumors which had reached her during the years, and to which she had so vehemently refused credence, were true. Then came the pain and the heart agony as the idol came to be torn out; for "torn from her heart

he should be," she said to herself. An hour ago she had been so proud of him; but now? Yes, the dream was over. Little Flossie had not died in vain.

The next day the great panting engine rapidly bore Louise on her homeward journey, yet it could not go fast enough to suit the wild tumult in her heart. After what seemed an age, the familiar home depot was reached. She had half expected that her father or one of the boys would meet her, else how would she get out to the farm?

A sudden remembrance of the change swept over her. Ordering a carriage, she was soon being driven rapidly to the new home.

Rachel had been unusually busy that morning, and had just sat down in an easy chair for a few minutes' talk with her husband, who had entered when hearing the noise of wheels at the gate, and glancing out she caught sight of the carriage which carried passengers to and from the trains.

"Why, who can it be?" and she looked curiously at the strangely familiar figure now coming up the walk.

As Louise stepped upon the porch she raised her veil as if in search of something familiar. As Rachel looked on the face, and recognized it as her daughter's, a sudden fear swept over her.

"Louise! Louise! my child! speak, tell me, are you ill?" for Louise was now sobbing—the first tears since that dreadful morning.

"Yes, mother, sick of life, sick at heart."

Gently, Rachel unloosed her wraps and removed her hat, and with motherly tact soothed her while she told the dreadful story.

"Mother," said Louise, after the storm had spent itself, and she had been soothed by the sympathy of both father and mother, "it is all over. Henceforth he must be to me as if he had never been. I can never forget poor little Flossie."

At this, though her face betokened naught but true sympathy with the grief of her daughter, a song of thanksgiving arose in the mother's heart. Curiously enough, even as she held her in her arms and comforted her, the night of her own agony in the farmhouse came vividly back. How, torn with doubts and fears, she had tossed upon her bed, saying over and over to herself, "It must be broken off; but how?" Alas, that in the answering there should be so many ruined hopes and so much of sorrow!

To do her justice, it must be said that she was grieved to hear of Richard's fall. She had not expected it to come in so gross a manner. She had yielded at last a tacit consent to the marriage

which seemed inevitable; but with all her intuitions on the alert, she could see nothing but unhappiness. Better a thousand heartaches at present, she said to herself as she noted Louise's grief, than that the entire life should be wrecked, and trusting to the elasticity of youth, she hoped that all would yet be well.

After the first greetings, and the first pangs of shame and grief over, Louise quickly detected the changes time had brought about. Her father looked old and careworn, and there came a realizing sense in her heart of all the dear ones had suffered; and the hope was born and grew that, though her own happiness was as she believed wrecked forever, still there might remain the joy of lightening their burdens.

The greatest change was in her brothers and sisters. She could hardly connect the old, quiet playmate Ruth with the tall, slender, girlish woman, who ruled with a sway of gentleness in the little schoolhouse just back of the farm.

Edward and John seemed suddenly grown up, the latter a counterpart of his father. Indeed, sometimes as he walked down the yard, there was that in his carriage that brought back strangely to Rachel the old days at Lynton, when a shy, rugged farmer had become all in all to her. He had his

father's strict notions of honesty and his mother's unquestioning faith, and with the advantage of a modern education, he bade fair to make a widely useful man. But it was a matter of regret that he seemed less inclined to study than the others. There had been so much hard work on the farm, always something for which he seemed especially fitted; so it was not strange that he was not the student that either of the older ones was.

A letter soon followed Louise from Asbury, in which he stated that he had received an offer to take charge of a congregation in the State where the university was situated. So, with his parents' leave, he would not be home during the vacation, and Louise was the more readily reconciled to this, because, while he sympathized with her in the mortification which she had endured, yet, with his strict notions of right and wrong, he had always agreed with his mother that there could be nothing but unhappiness from the marriage, and really he felt that no price was too dear to pay for release from such a bondage.

The father and mother began, though, to wonder if their children would ever be at home together again.

## XIX

## "Farewell, Life Choice"

LOUISE soon found her niche in the household. She had lost none of her old helpfulness, and as Ruth's school was just closing, the mother would say, jesting, that with two grown daughters her occupation was gone.

She found the family still sore over the loss of their home, yet bravely trying to make the best of life. As for herself, she did not dare let them know how much she missed the dear old home and the farm, with the many associations of her childhood, nor how much of a stranger she felt herself to be in the smart new cottage they were beginning to call home.

In those days she did not look far into the future. The past had been so bitter, perhaps it might be given her in the every-day life of the present to be of some practical use to her brothers and sisters. So, with as much zeal as though her livelihood depended upon it, she began giving Ruth instruction in music. Edward's rapid development had

startled her, and it was with genuine pride that she noted his well-defined literary taste. She often said to her parents, as she noted his unerring judgment of the literature which came into the home, that certainly, somewhere and somehow, he would find his life-work among books; but how should she interest John, rugged, plain-spoken, practical John, upon whom the family were coming to lean more and more? For that he must be interested in books and in study she felt very sure.

Now fortune favored her. Quite a bit of local interest was manifest just now in the application of certain phosphates to a stretch of alkaline lands which ran up to one side of the city, and none were more interested than John in the outcome. This gave her an idea. Might he not become interested in chemistry itself? She approached the question with tact, and erelong it came to be the usual thing to have an "experiment" on hands. One victory won, she planned another. She had many interesting episodes of her class studies in geology, with which she regaled him, as they took tramp after tramp, of her planning, together. Yes, they really littered up the house, and brought home much that was worthless; but a nature hitherto deaf to the persuasive voice of study was surely awakening, and Louise, fresh from a realm where learning

and culture were sovereign, felt no trouble too great if that goal could be reached.

It was not strange that occasionally on these tramps their feet should turn toward the old farm. One day, as they sat together on the edge of the woodland Louise remembered so well, John recounted for his sister's benefit the whole history of those dreadful weeks. So vivid was his portrayal that she seemed to live over the scene, and could almost hear the creak of the wagons that bore the family and belongings away.

"But I tell you, sister mine, I 'll have every acre back," and as he spoke his glowing face and flashing eye showed that this promise, which he had made to himself and his mother in the midst of their trouble, had taken deep root in his heart. Louise watched the strong face, and began to question him as to his plans. These she found were as yet very vague; but here was her opportunity, and in a kindly way she showed that in order to cope with the world an education was necessary. "But I 'll never go to college," insisted he.

"Well, you need not if you so choose; but a certain amount of education you must have. Take mathematics, for instance—

"Do n't mention that study. It is the prince of all evils," interposed John.

"By no means; rather, this science is mankind's best friend," and she went on to tell him, among other things, of the wonderful array of facts that would be absolutely unknowable without this exact science. His interest was aroused, and before another week had passed he had gotten the key to successful study—*he was interested.* Then began a companionship which, in after years, when an ocean came to roll between these two, became a blessed memory. Nor did this gifted sister, with all the later work that she was permitted to do in after years, ever value aught of that so highly as she did these few weeks spent with her brother.

A few weeks after Louise's return, an event occurred which, in order properly to chronicle, we shall have to return to the university, so suddenly and unceremoniously left.

Never did Esau of old sorrow more over the loss of his birthright than did Richard Newcomb when he came to himself and realized what had occurred.

Shame, mortification, self-condemnation, and anger at his false friends, raged in his breast. With intellectual, laurel-crowned brow, his "Demosthenes" gazed solemnly at him from the mantle. How he hated the unoffending silver! What were a thousand prizes, if disgrace ruled supreme and Louise were lost?

Braceton flippantly bade him "cheer up." To Richard's credit, be it said, he angrily turned on him and bade him begone; he wished never to see him again.

Was all lost? Gradually the hope grew upon him that it was not. He knew that Louise's great love had stood firm in the other great trials. Might he not hope it would yet stand? He turned this over, and at last resolved to go and throw himself upon her mercy. He knew of her sudden flight home, he could guess her mortification; but there was but one hope in life left him. He would see her, would plead his case, and give her his solemn pledge that he would never again touch wine in any form.

How clearly he now saw, with her, that this was for him the only safe course!

One day in the early summer, Louise was startled by the appearance of her lover. She dared not look at him, lest the sight of his abject sorrow might turn her.

"Never again would he fall so low," came the promise straight from the heart; for the pleader knew that for him it was a matter of life or death. With her by his side, he was sure he could stand; without her, he was lost. But no; she could not listen. She had to bid him go; for a dead baby-

face looked out from a bank of flowers, bidding her remember that "a drunkard is a slave."

So these two parted. The one, to go to her room, to throw herself upon the hard floor in agony, to moan, to pray, and finally, from her knees, to go out bravely into life to take up such duties as He might give. The other? As Adam left Paradise, to that may this other going be likened. Behind were love and happiness, and, he told himself, success. Beyond? But he could get no further; for despair lay at his heart. *He knew he was lost.*

Did she do right? Was not her place at his side, if in happiness? Well, if in suffering, still the same? Ought she not to have thrown her pure, strong self in the breach in an effort to save this erring, brilliant young man?

Ask the drunkard's child, who begs at your doorway, half clad, hungry, often diseased in body, an imbecile in mind; ask the drunkard's wife, as hungry, beaten, bruised, she pitifully stoops on the common to gather a few sticks to warm her babes, while she goes to beg charity that they may be fed. Ask, if you still doubt, the murdered Flossies (and they are many), and in one strong chorus the answer comes, *"She did right!"*

After Richard's departure, until near the close of the summer, the days went by without incident.

Louise, with the old imperiousness all gone, anxious for a work that might help her to forget her sorrow, entered heartily into the duties of the home. She often contrasted this summer with the last—that so full of the world, and this of home quiet. One day, toward the end of August, a letter came to her from Emma's home, but the superscription was not Emma's.

She broke the seal, and read with growing interest and surprise, then handed it in silence to her father.

It proved to be from Mrs. Millionaire, who wrote, not only in loving remembrance, but in referring to the pleasant acquaintance of a year ago, said: "You will remember my brother William, who was in theological school when you were here. He and his wife have been accepted as missionaries to a province in China. The Woman's Union Missionary Society is earnestly calling for a consecrated young woman to go with them to teach in a school. Indeed, I shall have to say plainly, to build up from nothing a girls' college. I have had you in my mind as a suitable person. Will you go? Shall I present your name as a candidate?"

The letter dropped from John Stevenson's hands as he finished reading it aloud to his wife. How often about their hearthstone had foreign mission-

aries been earnestly prayed for! Many were the sacrifices that had been made that they might have more for this beloved cause. But to give a daughter, and her one who had throughout her life been in a peculiar sense the brightness, the sunshine, the music of the home! How could it be? And Louise? See her as she stands there by the window ledge, her face a study of emotions. So resolutely had she thrust away her cup of proffered happiness, and so uncomplainingly had she busied herself about the home, that not one of the household had realized the real depth of the blow under which she staggered.

It is a strange fact that parents are often slow to ascribe the same depth of feeling to their children which they themselves possess. To illustrate: Rachel Stevenson's children never tired of hearing her tell of the dear old village of Lynton, of the old sweet days when she and their father became all in all to each other, of their wedding-day, and of the strange journey westward. As the boys and girls grew older, often one would say to the other, "How much mother must have loved father to have left her friends and home forever!" and, though Rachel had not seemed to suspect it, just such a love had Louise felt for Richard Newcomb. Thoughts of him had entered into every phase of

her life. When she had practiced a song, running all through and giving zest to the practice had been thoughts of her bonny young lover. Ah, how brilliant he was! How hard she must work for his sake! This self-abnegation of true love must always remain one of the wonders of the human heart. Yet loving him so, she had relentlessly, at duty's bidding, uttered the words that had parted them forever. She was too brave and sensible, though, to allow her life to become a failure; so she had thrown herself, with all her energies, into the duties that had happened to lie nearest. But O, the heart hunger, the ache, and the pity! The one cry of her heart had been for work, absorbing work, and now came this call. Was it of God? Was she worthy? Her heart bounded at the thought. If these two questions were but settled, how gladly she would go! She had told her parents much concerning her work and study, during the past summer, as a member of the mission circle. Could it be, they thought as they noted her eagerness to go, that that had been a providential school, sent before by the Father to prepare this child of his for service? If so, no. But it could not be settled without help; but the Help so freely promised for every need was given, and after a week, in what seemed in its heart-agony to be an

echo of Gethsemane, this Christian father and mother were able, through their tears, to say, "Go."

Perhaps never did weeks slip by as did these few intervening between the date fixed for her departure. Asbury hastened home, that they might all be together again. So, with aching hearts, father and mother saw the dawn of the day that was to take their darling away, yet not one would have uttered the word *"Stay."*

Louise never forgot the last morning, as they gathered for family prayers. How old, how bent, seemed her father, as with trembling voice he began to read those matchless words of David, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty!" From the beginning, John and Rachel Stevenson had been so careful about nothing as that they and theirs should so dwell; therefore he had a right to pray, as he now did: "Make good thy promises, O God! We have sore need of thy sheltering wings. Infold this dear child!" Little wonder the prayer died down in sobs, and remained unfinished. Ah, well! He knew. Have little fear, brave girl; the Sheltering Wings will cover thee, and the Everlasting Arms will be underneath.

A few hours later she was gone—gone, with her cheery ways, her sweet voice, and her sunny pres-

ence. Asbury accompanied her as far as New York. Had the journey been a quarter of a century later, they would, of course, have sailed from a western port; but arrangements had been made that she should sail with an English party from Liverpool.

A week later, in one of the largest churches of New York, a "farewell meeting" was announced for some outgoing missionaries who were about to sail. The hour was filled with prayer and testimony and songs of praise. The missionaries had mostly spoken of their interest in the work, and how willingly they had given themselves to the cause; but the audience was chiefly interested in a young girl, especially gifted, who was leaving, so it was said, a loving home-circle, having consecrated her life to this work.

Anticipating the natural wish of the audience to hear her, the kindly presiding officer, bending over, spoke a few words in her ear. She arose, stood a moment, and then the wondrously rich voice began, in song, "Nearer, my God, to Thee," with the words:

> 'E'en though it be a cross
> That raiseth me,
> Still, all my song shall be,
> Nearer, my God, to Thee;
> Nearer to Thee."

The audience was moved to tears. Yet none of them guessed the story of the cross which had brought the singer so wondrously near the Divine One.

* * * * *

"Did you see that strange, poorly-clad woman in the rear of the church" said one to another, as they slowly wended their way homeward after the services.

"That one who seemed to be so much affected with Miss Stevenson's song?"

"Yes."

"Doubtless she was some one who had dropped in off the street."

Later the bell rang at the home where Louise was stopping, with her dear friend Emma, who had come to see her sail, and a poorly-clad woman, carrying a baby, asked to see Miss Stevenson. Louise went at once to the room where she was waiting, and after eagerly scanning the visitor's face, with a start of surprise, cried out, "Therese Newcomb!"

Yes, it was she. In some way the poor, homesick, unhappy child had heard of the meeting and of Louise, and she had yielded to an irresistible desire to see her. She had not expected to make herself known; but the song had broken up the

fountains of her heart, and she had been impelled to seek her out. Nor did she even now expect to whisper aught of the sadly-humiliated life she was living, nor to speak of the cruel treatment of him for whom she had left home and friends, who, failing to realize the money he had expected, vented his ill-will upon the innocent, foolish young girl.

But before she knew it, Louise had taken the puny, creeping babe in her arms, the young mother had pillowed her head on her shoulder, and was sobbing out the whole story.

"But you must go home."

"O Louise, I can not go back. I must live out my wretched, miserable life. I have sinned away every opportunity of my life. When I heard of my mother's death, I thought I should surely die, and I wanted, so much, to go home; but he—" and she shuddered at the name. "O, I dared not go! Then he was more angry than ever when we heard of father's loss of property. No, I dare not go," she moaned. "I believe he would follow me and kill me."

And was this abject, cowering creature the old-time, happy, sprightly Therese?

Louise shuddered as she thought of the treatment she must have received to have brought her to this.

"But you must go," she rejoined; and then she told Therese of her father, of his solitary vigils in the old home, and how, as the weeks lengthened into months, his grief seemed to grow heavier. Therese was greatly touched at the recital, and amid her tears consented to make an attempt to escape her present miseries. Perhaps, notwithstanding her grievous fault, there might yet be love and a welcome in the shattered home.

That night, Asbury Stevenson helped a scared-looking woman into a western-bound train, and placing a ticket in her hands, bade her be of good heart; yet she trembled each time a heavy footstep passed through. Had she but known it, she had little need for fear. Even that morning the evil man whose cupidity had wrecked her life, realizing that the wealth he had expected to obtain through her had slipped from his grasp, had put into execution a plan, long nurtured, and had sailed for his own France. Both mother and babe were deserted.

The following morning, as the missionary party were being driven to the pier, Emma, who sat with Louise's hand clasped in hers, said, almost in a whisper, "Louise, before you go I must—" We lose the whispered story, if story it is, but catch Louise's outspoken, half-deprecatory comment,

"Sly Asbury!" Whatever the communication was, it must have been a pleasant one; for suddenly Emma was gathered close in Louise's arms.

In a few hours the outgoing party saw the shores of their native land recede, and weeping, waiting friends turned slowly about to gather up again the broken threads of their busy lives

## XX

## Therese—On Both Sides of an Ocean

THE rapidity with which the events have shaped themselves has made it quite impossible to return to the stricken man whom we left by the grave of his beloved wife. Though Marie would gladly have had him come to her, he preferred to return to his own home, where, during all this time, he has lived in great loneliness. The greater part of the large house was shut up, the few rooms needed for his use being kept in order by a housekeeper. The only gleams of happiness that fell across his path in these dark days were when Marie's little Margaret would toddle to him, climb upon his knees, and in sweet, baby fashion rub her little soft hand over his careworn face. At such times his face would light up, but the light would as quickly fade away. He seemed, as Louise had told Therese, to be settling into a hopeless melancholy.

His business had finally been "settled," which term, by a strange misnomer, had been chosen to indicate the final adjustment of property between a bankrupt and his creditors; and save for this

house, which had been the property of his wife, he was penniless. The peculiar misfortunes which had befallen him in his family affairs had brought him much sympathy, and when a new company opened the "mills," he was offered the position of manager, with a good salary.

Had he, like his old friend John Stevenson, had his family about him, he might, with his rare business qualities, by steering clear of the rock of speculation, have yet done well,—but Margaret, the joy of his home, was gone. Therese, that blithe, bright girl, who had nestled so close to his heart, was, he felt sure, somewhere, perhaps in want of the necessities of life, paying the price of her folly.

Through the first months of his sorrow he had clung to Richard as his chief prop. How his heart had bounded as the telegraphic message, sent as soon as the result was known, told him of his oratorical victory! But all this died out as the miserable story of the evening's subsequent work reached him, and also the knowledge of his estrangement from Louise. He had seen him leave, to seek his fortune in the West, with but little hope that he would be able to withstand the temptations sure to be placed before him.

A few days after the burial of his wife an event occurred which did much to comfort him. This

was no less than a visit from John Stevenson. Neither of the men said much; but there was that in the hearty hand-grasp which told the sorrowing man that the past was forgiven, and that for him there was no other feeling than that of genuine sympathy. Indeed, the Stevensons had come to feel that the intention had never been wrong; but rather that, in the hopeless task of unraveling the entanglements, hoping vainly that each week would set matters right, their own little fortune had gone down with his greater one.

But more appalling to them than loss of property seemed the scattering of the family. Even the death of Margaret, they felt, could have been borne —alas! many a wife and mother has had to be lain away—had the children all been present to comfort and sustain the afflicted man. In comparison, their own lives seemed strangely full of blessings. So it was with no feigned sympathy that John Stevenson had gone to his old friend. Yet even the sympathy of an old friend could not take the place of his own; so after Richard's departure for the West, he had drawn entirely within himself, and with a growing chill at the heart, his friends feared his mind might give way under accumulation of sorrow.

Sometimes of a night, when the house was still, he would wander aimlessly from room to room.

Usually, upon such a trip, he would go to a drawer where a few valuables were kept, open it, take from its depths a laurel-crowned silver head, gaze fondly at it, and then with a sigh turn wearily away.

On one such night he was sitting gloomily by the fire which had been kindled in the grate—for the evening was chilly—when the door-bell, now so seldom used, suddenly rang. Answering the summons himself, what was his surprise to see upon the doorstep a woman, ill clad, with a wailing babe in her arms, and to hear a voice, strangely familiar, call out: "Father, father! I have come back to home and to you! You will not turn me away?"

It was Therese, who had made the long journey back to the home from which she, in her foolishness, had fled.

What if her poor little life had been overshadowed by a mistake? So had his. With outstretched arms he welcomed her back to his desolate home, and Therese knew, for the first time since her foolish marriage, the value of the homely comforts of food and shelter.

It had not yet been two years since she had gone; but how she had aged! It seemed hardly possible that this haggard, worn woman could be identical with the merry, fun-loving girl who had danced through these great halls.

When her return became known, Ruth Stevenson soon sought her, and to her, for the sake of the sweet friendship of other days, reticent as she might be to a curious world, Therese told her sad story, and in this tender and sympathetic friend she came to find her greatest comfort.

Before Louise sailed, she had found time for a hurried letter to Ruth. Referring to Therese, she said: "We must remember that she has been more sinned against than sinning. It is not ours to judge harshly; and looking back now over the years, it seems that the events that have so crushed her, and others as well, were but the inexorable reaping of the careless sowing of other days. Be it yours, dear Ruth, to lead her back to happiness and a Christian faith. Remember, she is scarcely yet a woman in years. Life may hold much for her yet." Thus the gentle ministry of love began, which we must leave to the years.

Strangely enough, it was left to Louise to be the bearer of a message that, though startling in itself, brought in reality the first breath of freedom which Therese had known since the miserable night of her flight. The message told of the death of her husband. He had died on shipboard. There was not the possibility of a mistake. A ship from America was being held in quarantine, owing to the death

of several of its passengers. In the printed list of the dead was the name of "Monsieur Martin Les Page, of New York, returning to France after an absence of years." Therese was free.

A few weeks later a little grave was made by the side of Mrs. Newcomb's, and the young mother grieved anew for a little life gone out.

* * * * *

During all these weeks of intense feeling in their own home-circle, the Stevensons had also been keenly alive to an event of great importance about occurring in what they were pleased to call "their home church" in Burrtonville. This event appealed most strongly to all who had worshiped years ago in the little log-house. Not only had that been outgrown, as we have seen, but also the "frame" structure which superseded it; and now a really elegant "stone," with all the modern conveniences of lecture, Sunday-school, and class rooms, stood ready for dedication. And more, Dr. Blank, an editor, who was well known to this people by the tempting dish of mental viands which he weekly served, was to preach the dedicatory sermon. There were many homes in Burrtonville that would gladly have opened to the honored guest; but as it happened that this editor knew of the brave young

girl who but so lately had gone from the Stevenson home, and had met and talked with the son who was preparing himself for his chosen life-work, what more natural than that he should desire to know the father and mother? He proved an eloquent preacher in the pulpit, and a sharp student of human nature in the home. Indeed, he had really entered this home as a searcher after a *cause*. He had seen the effect in the two young lives just mentioned. "Did some unsuspected talent," he asked himself, "exist in this plain father and mother, which, perhaps being smothered by the meager educational facilities of their early life, had reappeared in their children?" But he had not been in the home a day till he thought he had discovered the secret. The book-shelves between the flower-filled windows had gently whispered in his ear, calling his attention to the well-selected volumes with which they were filled. Glancing the titles over, he found they had been culled from every realm, and touched upon every topic vital to the interest of a soul, and each book bore the marks of careful reading.

From his first entrance into the home, he had been strongly attracted toward Edward, and thinking to push the acquaintance with the shy, reticent lad, he suggested a drive over the prairie. Under

such circumstances the acquaintance progressed rapidly; for as the shyness wore off, Edward proved himself so well informed, and withal such a good conversationalist, that the genial editor began to feel as though he was in company with one of his compeers rather than a country lad. Just as they were nearing the edge of a bit of woodland, Edward suddenly drew rein, and unceremoniously handing the lines to his companion, sprang out, and began at once to carefully remove from the soil a plant growing by the roadside. Lovingly he brought his treasure back. "It is," said he in explanation, "a good specimen of the Lymegrass. I needed just this to make my collection of grasses complete for this locailty."

Now if Dr. Blank had one hobby above another, it was the study of plant-life, and these two, under the influence of this new bond, soon became fast friends, the doctor waxing eloquent in the discussion of his favorite theme, and the boy listening as under a spell, and when, the next day, the guest was leaving, he quietly wrote in his private reference-book the name of his young friend, Edward Stevenson.

Thanks to Louise's tact and influence, John, at the opening of the year, was ready and glad to join Ruth and Edward in the academy; but, practical as

of old, he insisted on "picking" his studies, and laughed to scorn the suggestion of such studies as he deemed of very little use in the actual battles of life.

"Baby Rose" was a baby no longer, but was fast becoming her mother's chief helper. She was a quiet, home-loving child, very like her brother John in appearance. When people saw her they were apt to say, "She will make a sensible, practical woman," and, noticing her deft movements, would be inclined to say that, some day, in a home of her own she would find her sweetest joy. She is not destined to thrill the world with her music; but like her sister Ruth, her voice and touch chord wonderfully well with the simple home-tunes, and hearing her, her father vaguely recalls his own mother, who is but a shadow of memory,—so strangely are voice and form, yes, and mind and soul characteristics, handed down from one generation to another. Perhaps, of all the family, none grieved so much as she for Louise.

She was not old enough, as were the others, to comfort herself with the nobleness of the action, nor yet to realize how much good she would do across the sea. She had been so proud of her when she had come home from the college, and listened wonderingly at the rare sweet music of her voice, her

private opinion being that the angels made no such music. And now she was gone, gone out of her life forever, and the loyal little heart refused to be comforted. Before her going, Louise had taken her in her arms and told her of the many homeless little girls whom she was going to work for; but no matter how dark she painted the picture, the result was the same,—Rose clung almost wildly to the sweet sister who was going.

Indeed, the home hearts all ached. They were happy in the thought of her usefulness; but that ill took the place of the sunny, living presence.

As soon as it had time to reach them, a letter came, which depicted the life so plainly, and was so rich in expressions of love, that with its reading the absent one seemed nearer.

Perhaps we can not do better than to look in on the writer.

The long, wearisome ocean journey was at last ended. The missionary party consisted of Mr. Winters and his bride and the English stranger. "It was a good thing," Louise wrote, "that these last were of the party; for Mr. and Mrs. Winters were so dreadfully absorbed in each other, I might as well have been sailing in another ocean." A mission was already started in the city of Foochow, and they were to go there, stay awhile, get an ink-

ling of the language, and then push on to the interior province which was to be their work.

Had it not been for that wonderful "something" that years ago, at the plain altar of the little home church, had come in and wondrously filled this young heart, her soul must have fainted within her as she first looked upon the unspeakable degradation of those she had come to help. As she went through the narrow, reeking streets, hunting for days for a lodging-place, and for weeks for a room, however small, to begin the school, she began to experience the trial of her faith; but there is One who has promised that "he will never leave nor forsake his children," and in those dark, early days of her missionary life, he wonderfully verified the promise. After a time she learned the language sufficiently to be able to tell the simple "old story," but it was not always possible to get listeners.

One day a miserable creature, a woman, had pushed her out of the room where she had gone to talk with her. About the door swarmed a crowd of dirty children. Suddenly the misery and wretchedness of it all swept through her mind, and yet Christ died for these; and his gospel, if allowed to come into these lives, would uplift them, and cleanse, not only their souls, but their polluted bodies as well. With a yearning perhaps akin to

that of the Master when he wept over Jerusalem, this brave young girl longed to help these wretched ones into a better life. As she paused, suddenly the words and music of a home Sunday-school hymn came into her mind, and scarcely conscious of what she did, that sweet, rich voice, that had in other days held entranced the most cultured audiences, rang out on the stifling hot air. The little children stopped their play, wretched women peered out from the doorway of what they called home, laborers stopped in the narrow, dirty street, and many followed the "foreign lady" to hear her sing.

No need afterwards to hunt an audience, for the audiences sought the singer. And yet in the home-land there had been those who had grieved over this buried talent!

About the time that Commencement roses had again begun to bloom in the college campus, rich in associations to both Asbury and Louise, a little room in the most crowded part of that great Chinese city had been obtained, and Louise, as the teacher of five little Chinese girls, felt her life-work had begun. The Girls' College of Interior China had been founded.

## XXI

## Some Graduates—A Wedding

THE same June that witnessed the planting of the "mustard-seed" across the ocean was unusually fraught with interest to the Stevenson home. In the very first weeks, Edward and Ruth went out from the halls of the home academy, and it was conceded that among all the long list of honorable alumni which this growing institution was beginning to boast, there had not gone out more thorough students than this brother and sister. The future plan was that these both should, in the fall, attend the college Asbury was just leaving.

While their graduation was of great interest to the home, yet it was overshadowed by something that had lately been whispered about in connection with the closing days of Asbury's school-life.

About the last of June he would receive the bit of parchment, the visible sign of that for which he had been striving. Then, instead of coming at once westward, he was to make the journey east, and in the same rich old church where perhaps the

echoes of his sister's voice still lingered, Louise's dearest friend Emma was to become his wife.

These were busy days for both Rachel and Ruth. There were so many tidying touches to be given here and there before the sweet young bride should arrive, and it was little wonder that, as they worked, often the tears would fall as they thought of the absent one who, far away, amid surroundings they felt sure their home eyes could not picture, had in a manner died to the joys of the home.

"O yes," thought Rachel, "if Louise were only here, she, in her own peculiar way, would lend a charm to the humble home." It must not be thought this mother gave her eldest daughter grudgingly to the Lord's service. No, she would not have uttered the words that would have held her back; but the mother-heart ached, and sometimes the mother-arms seemed unconsciously to again clasp this loved one to her breast, and perhaps after all, He who planted the mother-love did not think less of the sacrifice because it was offered amid the throes of an aching heart.

The morning of their expected arrival at last dawned clear and bright. The little cottage really wore quite a holiday air. Surveying her finished work, practical Ruth gave the keynote to the family feeling when she said, "We may do what we

will, and yet our home can never be anything like the home Emma is leaving, and the most we can do is to be our own true selves and give her a hearty welcome." And they did, and Emma, child of the city as she was, thought in all her life she had seen nothing so beautiful as the cheery home-room, with its flutter of white curtains and odor of home-grown flowers.

Emma was her old sprightly self. Not a few of her city friends had drawn somber-shaded pictures of the privations that would be hers as the wife of a Western itinerant. To all this banter she replied in the same vein, adding she had nothing to fear. Had she not run the entire gamut of economy during the days of her club life? And if everything else failed, she had understood that the West was noted for its *fine potatoes*.

Yes, she was going willingly to share, as the future might prove, the joys or sorrows, triumphs or failures, of this young student. After all, we opine that there will be but few failures.

Asbury is a close student. He has strong convictions of right and wrong. Aside from his collegiate education, his whole home-life has been one long school, in which the lessons of loyalty and devotion to the Church, as well as intelligence concerning her history and scope, have been well

learned. Moreover, the "fathers" say he can "preach." His chosen companion has both graces of mind and of person; besides, too, her natural sprightliness of disposition offsets well the sterner gravity of his nature.

One thing time can never touch or efface, and this is, the deep, invincible hatred which she has in her heart towards that great evil which in our modern times is, like the fabled Gorgon, living by devouring our young men. Along with this hatred, born as we know of a bitter experience, is a tender, pitying love for the victims. It will not be surprising if the future holds some special work along this line for her.

They are to go at once to a far Western State, and amid scenes new to each are to begin the solving of their own life-problem. How happy they are! How many lofty dreams for the future! The college orations have been so full of such flowery terms as "whitened fields," "awaiting the sickle," and such like, that they imagine the future as a smiling goddess, coming more than half way to meet them, her arms full of bundles labeled "Success." Well, they are young! We who are older may smile, knowing well that time will brush away many of these illusions; yet we would not have youth one whit less hopeful.

Among the guests who came to do honor to the wedding occasion was Earnest Warren, Asbury's dearest friend during all his collegiate years. He found the sweet home-life of the cottage very attractive. He has yet another year in college, and Ruth, too, expects to begin in September. We should not be a bit surprised if——.

On the morning of the departure of Asbury and his young wife, Edward was surprised to receive a communication which showed his honored friend, the editor, had not forgotten him. There was an expedition which an association of scientists were sending out, made up of two or three professors from so many colleges, whose object was to classify and study the flora of certain parts of the Northwest. He had asked for and obtained a place on the expedition for Edward. He well knew how much this would mean to the boy, not only the association with the learned men, but an opportunity to push his studies in plant-life.

Indeed, nothing would have pleased this staid, gray-haired man himself better than to have joined the expedition and taken the tramp with the party; but how could he, with his great, clamorous "reading family," who would never have consented that their mental purveyor should have gone off junketing and left them to fare as best they might? But

he felt a real boyish thrill as he sent the welcome news to Edward.

And Edward? If he had suddenly stumbled upon that pot of gold which tradition has assigned to the end of the rainbow, he could not have been more surprised and delighted. Being the "boy" of the party, he was assigned certain chores, which, if done, paid all expenses, and allowed him time for the prosecution of his favorite study. Within a week after the receipt of the letter, he had completed his arrangements and was off.

How strangely still the house was during all that summer! Only three children left of the old, romping, noisy half-dozen, and of these three, John and Rachel could not hope that time would spare them much longer; for, like a hurrying stream, it was bearing them rapidly to the responsibilities of life. During this summer, Ruth and Rose greatly relieved the mother of the cares of the house, while John the younger became almost the sole manager of the "store." There had never been a regret over this last venture. It provided an income sufficient for the needs of the family. The home was not yet their own, but the future seemed hopeful.

Relieved of care, the father and mother began to find time for a renewal of the old companionship which, during the busy days of the last few years,

had been largely lost in mutual anxiety for the welfare of their children. It came to be a very usual sight for them to be seen sitting either in the shadow of the vine-covered porch or under the heavy boughs of the maple in the back yard.

Once, as William Newcomb went by hurriedly, he saw them thus. A bitter wave of feeling swept over him. Why was his home so desolate, his beautiful wife gone, and his son, the idol of his heart, a wanderer? He knew that as this contented pair talked together, more than likely their conversation was of their children, who bid fair to be the crown of their old age. But his heart answered this question. The Creator of each could not be charged with partiality. Centuries before, the warning had been sounded, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

"Yes," he bitterly acknowledged to himself, "we were wrong, all wrong, from beginning to end; and they of the farm were right. Life should mean more than a struggle for riches, and there are pleasures more real, more lasting, than are those which appeal to the senses, or upon which 'society' stamps her approval."

The quiet summer afforded an opportunity, too, for Ruth and Therese to get their friendship back upon the grounds of loving comradeship.

Poor Therese! It took many loving words from Ruth to convince her that her life was not irretrievably ruined. She could readily see her coming had been a blessing to her father; for though the home could never again take on its old cheery air, yet it was growing brighter. The human heart hungers for its own, and William Newcomb found his life happier as the strangely quiet woman who had come back to him, in place of the old, gay, romping Therese, went about the rooms, giving them here and there a home-touch. Thus far, as she recognized her usefulness to her father, she was glad; otherwise she was wont to say she would better never have lived. Her sister Marie, conscious of her own upright life, the honored wife of one of Burrtonville's wealthiest young men, happy in her own home, proud of her two sweet little children, had not met this young sister with outstretched arms; indeed, there was that in her haughty manner which always reminded Therese of her disgrace. She had put on the heaviest mourning for "poor mamma," had felt shocked over "papa's failure," and now, to have Therese come straggling in, and bring the matter back fresh into the minds of all, seemed too much. Better, much better, would it have been, she thought, if Therese had borne her troubles in silence. Let us not judge of her

harshly. She was only a selfish society woman, eager for the praise of her little world, as vapid as herself.

"No, no, Ruth," Therese was saying, as she and Ruth talked together; "you know all about it. I can not undo the past; my life is ruined. I am really fit for nothing. I have no education. I have learned a little smattering of several things, but I know nothing thoroughly. I never learned even to do housework as you did. For such a person, I see now all too clearly, there is no place in all this busy world. Even if it were not for my miserable marriage, I should have to write 'failure' over my life."

And the hopeless manner in which she folded her arms, and looked over toward the gleaming stones in the not far-distant cemetery, spoke more eloquently than could words of the despair she felt in her heart.

Ruth had no words for reply; but she gently kissed her, and said, as she was leaving: "You may feel thus now, but nevertheless I am sure there is a future for you, and in it you will find your work and your happiness; and in the years to come you will look upon these unhappy years as a dream."

That evening, Ruth gave the substance of the conversation to her mother. Rachel was lost in

thought for a time. Finally she said: "Therese is right in one thing. She has not sufficient education for a successful life. I do not mean the mere knowledge one gains from text-books; for there are those whom circumstances have kept them from the schools who, by perseverance, have largely made up for this lack, and have given themselves a broader and truer outlook of life. Something of this kind is what Therese needs, something that will lift her out of herself. Do you remember the strategy Louise used, to interest John, and how thankful we all are of the result?"

We can not stop to detail the steps with which Ruth began at once to bring about this result. She carefully selected the books she hoped would interest Therese, and read her paragraphs from them. All this judiciously, that she might not suspect her design. Finally, when she thought the time ripe, she suggested a home-course of study, this under cover of a desire to review some of her own studies, and before Therese realized it, the horror of the old life was slipping away, and her active young brain was awakening to the interests of the great throbbing world, which from the days of Adam has ever found a place for each earnest worker that has knocked at its portals. Aside from the educational need, Ruth felt sure Therese would

never fully drop her burdens till they were lost in a living Christian faith. Here again, if she would be successful, she dared not be obtrusive; but before the summer ended, a slight, shrinking little figure, heavily clad in black, was found each Sabbath by Ruth's side in the Stevenson pew, and to the gentle ministry of this young Christian, who, years ago, in the little log-church, had found how sweet it was to lose her life in His, we may safely leave for a time this childhood friend, trusting her to impart something of her own simple faith.

## XXII

## September—A Letter

SEPTEMBER is always a busy month. During its days the summer idlers, as well as the summer resters, return—the one, to listen again to the alluring yet wearying calls of society; the other, to take up the burdens of life afresh in the office, the pulpit, or at the desk.

The schoolhouses that, during the hot, dusty months, have stood with their doors closed, now have them flung wide open, and from all over the land, in country, town, and city, a long procession of little feet take up the march, and in a twinkling, these empty, gaunt, sentinel-like buildings, wearing an hour ago an air of complete desertion, are teeming with life.

The quickening life-blood, too, pulsates through the great halls of the colleges, and homes are yielding to them their choicest treasures. If it were possible, they would gladly retain them longer. But no; there is nothing so necessary as that they be prepared for the inevitable future. So they bid them God-speed, sending, as a charge to the college

that receives them, this message from the poet-king: "See to it that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."

Edward Stevenson returned from his summer jaunt of work and pleasure as rugged and brown as though he had been harvesting on the old farm acres. These weeks had meant much to him, much in the every-day association with men of education and culture. He had also been a careful student, and had often surprised the other members of the party by his accurate knowledge of plant habits. During the summer he was of great use in classifying and arranging the flora of the localities they studied, and in addition brought home a really excellent collection of his own. Something else happened, which, because of its bearing upon his future, deserves mention. This was the publication of his first article. His editor friend had said to him: "Now, if this jaunt has any interesting incidents that you think would read well, write them up and send them to me. I won't promise to publish; but you know," with that twinkle of the eye Edward had come to know, "we are always after the *best*."

To Edward the whole seemed full of interest, so

he wrote up a modest little account of a few days' work, naming his brain-child, "After Some Flowers," and in course of time it was published. He managed to live through the sensation of first seeing it in print, and (though he would never have supposed it) life went on quite as usual. Of course, Mother Rachel read it, and like another mother, as she thought of his future, "she kept these things and pondered them in her heart."

But now he was home; yes, and his belongings, as were Ruth's, were packed, and as Asbury and Louise had gone years ago, so these were going to the same college. How vividly that other September came back, as, with a hurried benediction and prayer, these two left the home!

Rachel had been called to the gate by the departing party to answer a question. As she started to return to the house, a sharp gust of wind rattled the great tree by the path, and blew from its branches a nest which in the spring had been a perpetual source of delight, with its wealth of young bird-life. "Ah, well; perhaps it is only natural," thought Rachel through her tears, "that young birds should fly; but how desolate they leave the nest!"

And desolate, indeed, seemed the home. It was useless to put on a mask and feign a cheerfulness

neither parent felt. Yes, the young birds were flying, and with them much of the cheer of the home-life. Edward and Ruth had left in the morning, and as they gathered about the small table for the noon meal, the mother broke down, and gave up trying to hide her sense of loss. As she lay on the couch in the room, her youngest son said:

"Mother, do n't grieve. You have at least one child who will remain at home. I never intend to leave."

"Nor I," chimed in Rose; and they kept their word.

John had yet another year in the academy. The last few months had witnessed a wonderful change in the sun-browned boy of the farm. He was not the same pattern with his ministerial brother Asbury, nor yet of the closer student Edward; but in his own practical way was likely to be as useful as either.

The boys and girls of this family were all of good physique, well formed, and with suppleness of grace that indicates the sensibly-reared family of young people. This was particularly true of John. He was a great, tall, broad-shouldered fellow, with dark eyes and hair to match. The latter, with its soft, wavy curl, would have been the envy of a modern belle. His voice was very like his father's,

with a gentle cadence that made it peculiarly acceptable either in sickness or anxiety, and his touch was as gentle as a woman's. Like Louise, he had always been particularly helpful, indoors as well as out. About every home there are always numberless little "turns" by which, if willing to do them, a man can wonderfully lighten the household cares. Those in the Stevenson home came naturally to be left for John. It was understood, when this last academic year was finished, he would assume the entire management of the "store."

He was also fast becoming of great use in the Church, though naturally shy. As the result of a conversation with Louise before her going, he had begun using his talents, and was developing as only young Christians who can do this, yet his practical views of life were shown here as elsewhere. About a year before this he had heard a sermon on "Giving," which greatly impressed him. As a result he resolved to keep a careful account of his expenses, and "pay over," as he termed it, the tenth. When the question of finances came up in the Church, his views were always so correct, that unconsciously these matters came to be left more and more to him, and though the problem of Church finances was often perplexing, yet he came nearer its solution than any one else.

While we have been lingering thus long, taking a final peep at the home that has so interested us, the students have been adjusting themselves to the year's work.

They did not enter the college as strangers; for their elder brother and sister had left a fragrant memory, and they were not long in finding their own niche in this busy hive of workers.

Edward's tastes inclined him to pay special heed to the sciences. As for Ruth, she continued the same thorough, painstaking student the home academy had known.

This year, with its routine of study, proved uneventful, but was none the less successful on that account.

The latter part of the winter was remarkable for a religious awakening, which spread until nearly all of the several hundred students who were not already professing Christians were converted. None who went through these strange weeks could ever forget them. The "fathers" might tell of the old-time camp-meeting, with its rapturous shouts and fervent Amens; yet this more modern movement, having its birth and carried on amid those who were nothing if not cultured, was not vastly different. There was the old-time conviction of sin, and if one might judge from the radiant faces, there was

the old-time realization of one's own personal acceptance.

During all these weeks, Edward Stevenson was strangely wrought upon. For years he had never questioned his personal relationship to his Savior; but his tastes and inclinations were quiet, and he had never taken an active part in the Church. But now—perhaps it was the result of the wonderful prayer-meetings among the young men; perhaps it was the influence of his favorite professor, who made it a point to bring out and interest every young man within his reach (alas! that in his college days, Richard Newcomb had not known such a friend),—but whatever the cause, he suddenly developed genuine leadership, and until the close of the meetings his voice was constantly heard in prayer and exhortation, so much so that a short time after their close he was given a license to preach. When this news was carried home, his father and mother could scarcely credit it. "No, I can not take it in," was his mother's comment; "yet I should be glad if this should prove his life-work." But John said: "The idea! If Edward should happen to have a book on hands he was interested in, he would certainly forget any appointment to preach which he might have."

Thus fraught with duties, the weeks went by

until the coming of June, when the home at Burrtonville again smiled a welcome to its student inmates. Edward came home only for a brief visit, as he had been offered work in an editorial office. This did not promise to be nearly so interesting as his last summer's jaunt; but though he little thought it, this became the ground-work upon which his future largely rested.

Before Ruth's return, she wrote her parents that she had something to tell them which she could not write. They easily guessed her sweet secret, and it took only a glance at the plain gold band which she wore upon her return to confirm their suspicion. This had been Earnest Warren's last year in college. It was little wonder that he desired to win for himself this young girl, whose gentle, gracious ways, as he had seen, had made her presence in her father's home a benediction. He had expected to enter the ministry, but he had been offered a position as teacher in a young college. This seemed to suit his present inclination, and it was arranged that in a year or two he would claim his bride.

The memory of Ruth's successful school-term still lingered in the home neighborhood, so much so that she was offered a position as one of the teachers in the home academy. She finally reluc-

tantly concluded to forego another collegiate year, yet she did not mean her education to cease; for she began a course of home-study and pursued it unweariedly.

Very often at this time the thoughts of both Ruth and her mother turned with a new tenderness to that brave one so many miles away. Until now, Ruth had not realized what the anguish of Louise must have been when she had seen *her* happiness shipwrecked; but this realization began to dawn upon her when, in answer to a letter telling of her new-found happiness and plans, there had at once come one from Louise, breathing earnest wishes for the continuance of her happiness. Although she spoke hopefully of her work, and wrote touchingly of the degradation about her, yet amid it all there was an undertone of sadness, as if the writer had looked into the coffin of a dead joy, and this the mother recognized, and yearned afresh for the blithe "singing bird" of the home; but she said over and over again in her heart, "She did right; yes, she did right." But alas! for the pity of it!

## XXIII

# A Kansas Preacher—His Work

IF one who happened to be of a speculative turn of mind had chanced to find himself on a certain western-bound passenger train one day, two summers before the events of the last chapter, he would have looked with considerable interest upon a young pair who seemed very much at home amid their surroundings. There was about each a quiet, well-bred air, and a something that proclaimed them fresh from their books. In addition to this, there was also an air of—well, if not exactly self-complacency, at least of self-satisfaction. Further, if the onlooker, bearing the proper credentials in his face, had, with the freedom of travelers, engaged the young man in conversation, he would have learned that the pair in whom he was interested was the Rev. Asbury Stevenson and wife, late of an Eastern college; that during the last weeks of the college year a presiding elder of one of the frontier districts in Kansas had written the Faculty to name a young man who could take charge of a small "station" (considerable emphasis on that

word) on his district, "where the principal work would be to build up the charge, even to the church-building itself," and from that correspondence had come this journey. Their destination was Falls City, which city, the young divine explained, took its name from being built upon a river by that name.

"Ahem! and have you ever built a church? Know anything about it?" the interrogator might have asked.

"No; but—" Here the Rev. Mr. Stevenson would have paused, and in some inexplicable way one would have gotten the impression that half a dozen such undertakings would be a matter of small importance to this brave youth.

We, too, will watch these young travelers awhile. In a little while their train has reached that young stripling of a city, which to the traveler seems only the place where all the inhabitants of the nation are all at once engaged in the frantic effort to change cars and make no mistake, but which the native residents tell us is really one of the finest cities in the world, hence call it *Kansas* City. Here two alternatives were offered: They might continue their journey westward at once on a freight-car, or they might remain until morning and take a "passenger." Life thus far had held

no freight-car experiences, so they continued their journey *at once*, and as a result of their decision continued it for many long wearisome hours, even until they of the later "passenger" had jauntily passed them by.

They were to go to a "young city" (they had left the "towns" all east of the Mississippi), west of Topeka, and thence south fifty miles in a stage.

"The whole country looks as if it were unfinished," was Mrs. Asbury's comment, as she peered out of the car-window. And so it did. There were miles and miles of green prairie, with not a single trace of a living being, unless one should make an exception of the colonies of that queer nondescript animal, the prairie-dog, who, from his point of vantage, barked sharp, emphatic little protests against the lumbering, cumbersome engine, which puffed and snorted on its wearisome way, protesting, in its turn, over the task set it of dragging up a steep grade a train of cars none too few for two of its kind.

The sun beat remorselessly down, with not a tree in sight. Once in a while they of the caboose would catch in the distance a sight of a sort of green fringe, and the accommodating brakesman (who had recognized a fine specimen of the genus "tenderfoot") would volunteer the information that

"we were coming to the 'timber,' " or that we were crossing Blank River. But the utmost straining of the eye revealed only a growth of underbrush and some very scrubby "scrub-oaks." Of the old, spreading beeches, the stately oaks, and the graceful maples and poplars, there were none. And the "river"—the modest "creek" back of the Stevenson farm would have rippled and plashed in disdain at a hint of equality.

At intervals there would be a little cluster of unpainted, box-like houses, that stood out upon the prairie, with the tall grass waving in the very doorway. About these were invariably clustered a pathetic group of women and little children. About the little station were men in very broad-brimmed hats, who eyed the passing train with such an air of proprietorship, that one would have supposed they lived but for the one object of seeing it pull in.

At last the railway part of the journey came to an end, and as the Rev. Asbury was leaving the freight, he looked rather lugubrious as he did some careful brushing of his lovely "silk tile." But the real pleasure began with the stage-ride. Such beauty! The grass was so green, and was as soft as any of Mrs. Ward's elegant carpets. One novel feature was the undulating swells of the prairies, which were not unlike the waves of the ocean.

Here and there great herds of cattle pastured, and O, the flowers! They were of every form and hue, and before the journey was half completed, both of the young people were in love with their adopted State.

"It seems to me it is rather a windy day," remarked Emma, as she drew her wrap about her. The driver smiled, and murmured something about "Kansas zephyrs," which phrase she grew to know more about later on. A little purple cloud lay very innocently in the western sky, upon perceiving which, Asbury noticed that the driver whipped up his ponies, and kept them at a break-neck pace, eyeing the cloud in the meanwhile.

At last, in a relieved tone, he exclaimed, "We 'll make it!" Half an hour later they were clattering up the streets of what seemed a very tiny village, that had lost itself in immeasurable distances. The wind was blowing quite a gale; but the driver managed to say, "There is our new court-house, and there our schoolhouse." There was something in the very tone which implied expected admiration; but it was now growing dark rapidly. As the travelers started to go from the stage to the hotel, a great wind lifted the elegant "tile" from the head of the Rev. Asbury and sent it whirling down the street. It was useless to follow it, though he half

started to do so. Afterwards he called this his first "concession;" for the next morning he purchased a regulation, broad-brimmed "slouch," and it was many a day before he owned a counterpart of the first.

They were barely housed when the rain was falling in torrents, and the thunder—nothing like it had ever been heard before. They afterwards learned this was a peculiarity of the climate. Nature was wont to act as if she had an extra amount of work, which must be accomplished on schedule time. The rain would fall in torrents, thunders crash, and lightning play in a most terrific manner; but in an hour the earth would be bright and smiling after her bath, and the roads as hard as a floor.

Perhaps, though, the loyal "old inhabitant," who stood on the veranda of the little frame "Continental Hotel" enjoying the Rev. Asbury's surprise, held the true solution to the matter when he said: "There 's a heap of folks who jist won't have any faith in Kansas, and about so often nature has to git up a spree like this jist to let all sich know she 's all right."

Early the next morning the young minister hunted up the "brethren," in order to arrange the preliminaries for getting to housekeeping in shape. In connection with this "hunt" he had an experi-

ence which he did not soon forget. He had brought a letter of introduction to a Brother D——, who had been represented as one of the "pillars" upon which the whole church edifice, spiritual and temporal, was supposed to lean. To find Mr. D—— became, then, his first care. Perhaps his inquiry was misunderstood, and perhaps he became the victim of a Western joker (there were such); at any rate, instead of going to the business-house of the respectable and highly-recommended Brother D——, he made his way to the grocery-store of another Mr. D——, of similar name, who could scarcely be called a "Church pillar," but who was a good type of a hustling, godless, business man, not uncommon at that date, upon whose lips profanity was at home.

Now it so happened that this gentleman had been in a towering passion, ever since the storm of the evening before, over a consignment of groceries that were being "teamed" from the railroad, and which had arrived that morning thoroughly soaked. The air about him was just becoming a little clarified, though here and there a streak of sulphur remained, when the youthful minister presented himself, and, sure of a welcome (remembering, perhaps, the welcome his parents were wont to give their ministerial callers), advanced with

smiling countenance and outstretched palm, and announced himself as "Your preacher." Mr. D—— rose from the box of wet starch he was opening, scanned the face for a moment, and exclaimed, "My preacher!" But the Rev. Asbury's ears were polite, and so are my reader's; but in one little minute all of Rev. Asbury's preconceived notions of a "Church pillar" went toppling. Explanations were finally made, and in course of time the right Mr. D—— was found. Perhaps it might not be amiss to say in passing that the "joke" got out, and for a long time the Rev. Asbury was pointed out as "Old Jo D——'s preacher." "Old Jo" himself (he really was n't old—only in sin) came to feel a sort of proprietorship in the evidently sincere and zealous young man.

With this possible exception, both Rev. Asbury and his wife received a hearty greeting from all. It came to be a little amusing, when it was observed that, with each new presentation, before the conversation closed, the invariable question was asked, "You have of course seen our new court-house and school-building?" and the tone implied that not to have done so and be able to admire was unpardonable. It appeared that one of the first acts of the baby city had been to vote bonds, and, utilizing the fine building-stone that abounded in

every hill, had built a really fine court-house and school-building, which stood on the actual prairie, the pride of every man in the city, who looked upon them as the forerunners of the great city that was to be. They also served other purposes than those planned in the original. Done in lithographs, they tickled the fancy and unloosened the purses of Eastern capitalists. Besides these, the town consisted of a business street and a few of the box-like houses they had noticed along the railway.

During the forenoon the Rev. Asbury, with a volunteer guide, a member of his Church, started, with considerable expectancy, to the site of the new church. The letter describing the enterprise had read something like this: "We are not strong numerically, but the imperative need is a *church-building*. This we *must have* to hold our share of the incoming population. Such an enterprise has been begun, but abandoned. We have the finest site in the city. The foundation is laid, a part of the building material is on the ground, and we must have an active young man to push the work." It all sounded so well, and this ministerial fledgling started out fully expecting to find the workmen hammering away upon a building that would match the court-house and school.

As the walk progressed, and house after house

was left behind, his anxiety increased. Finally he struck what seemed the open prairie; but had he been familiar with the map of the city he would have known that he still was in its very heart. At last his companion stopped, exclaiming, "Here we are!" "Here is what?" Asbury asked. "The church-building." Involuntarily he rubbed his eyes. In front of him was a tall, rank mass of what seemed bushy weeds, which he had already learned was the native sunflower. Peering through these, he saw that an excavation had been made and a few foundation-stones placed in position. From appearances it perhaps *had* been begun, and most certainly abandoned. The "building material on hand" was represented by a pile of native stone, also sunflower overgrown.

"You have your subscriptions all right?" Asbury asked, in a voice that sounded strange even to himself.

"Umph! that 's what we sent for you for. Now, young man, do you think you can build this church?" and his interlocutor turned a critical look upon him. "Because if you can't, you had better take the first stage east."

Asbury did not answer, but on the walk back he did some hard thinking. Strangely enough, this was something even his young wife could not help

him to decide. To sum it all up, he saw clearly what was expected of him. He was to preach twice each Sabbath, a formidable undertaking in itself; take a subscription of strangers; many of them not connected with any Church; and personally superintend every detail of a work he knew nothing about.

As his chronicler, I am glad to write that at this point what in the home neighborhood was known as the "sturdy common sense of the Stevensons" asserted itself. Things were not as he had expected; "but God helping him, he would not fail." Sweeping through his mind came innumerable instances, of which he had read, of the heroic efforts of others to plant the Church elsewhere. Indeed, was not his own sister meeting every day discouragements far greater than any that could confront him? He remembered how, as he had sat about the glowing fire in the comfortable farm home, he had been thrilled as he had read of the heroic endurance of those who had braved Indian dangers on the frontier. It had all seemed so grand then. Should he yield till every known means had been tried?

"*No!*" and though the little handful who called themselves the "Church" little guessed it, their coveted new church was as truly built in that hour

of introspection on the part of the young pastor as it was a year later, when a delighted audience gathered to hear the dedicatory sermon.

At length a little house, very much of a pattern with the rest, was procured, and the home-life begun. There were a few elegant "touches" from the old luxurious home of Emma; but after the last piece of the plain furniture was in place, Emma exclaimed, "Now, if Louise and I had only known it, Mrs. Hoyson's home was elegance itself." But what if it was plain? They were rich in love for each other, rich in hope for the future and in consecration of their young lives to the work.

Emma never forgot her first Sabbath. A kind of hall above one of the business houses was being used as a place of worship. By the side of it stood a one-story building, which had been covered with a tin-roof (lumber was a luxury to be used as sparingly as possible). She had never heard her young husband attempt to preach, and felt a wifely anxiety that he should favorably impress his hearers. The wind was sweeping down the street with a momentum that carried everything not securely fastened before it. During the service the tin roof beneath kept up a monotonous rise and fall, with a harsh grating noise not unlike the wail of imprisoned spirits. As for the preacher himself, he had

gone to this service feeling entirely unable to meet it. He had never so realized his insufficiency before. As he arose to announce the hymn, and he beheld the questioning, critical, yet not unfriendly faces before him, a wild desire to flee through the door, which stood invitingly open, seized him. But no, he half-argued with himself, he could not be mistaken. That conversion of his, years before in the little room of the log-house, had been a very real occurrence, yet none the less so than the subsequent still but persistent voice which had led him into the ministry. Clearly, as though a voice had spoken, came the promise, "Lo, I am with you." A sudden agonized prayer for help went up, and the sermon began. An hour afterwards he could not have told what he preached, whether the words were lame or otherwise; but certainly the Spirit inspired them. A strange awe fell upon the little assembly. Many had come in curiously for a glimpse of the "new preacher," but melted before his earnestness. At the close no less than five came forward to unite with the Church.

The next morning he promptly began the work of obtaining subscriptions. Finally he had a sufficient amount to begin. The details of the various steps of this undertaking need not be recounted; but he soon found he must personally superintend

each one. Besides, funds were scarce, and every dollar must be made to count, and so, though Emma, remembering the stately and dignified Dr. Eloquent, of the home Church, winced a little as she saw her husband, in working attire, making a "hand," and once, when out upon an errand, she came across him selling out a load of watermelons on the street (they had been donated from Old Jo D——'s own "patch" for the new church if they could not be turned into money, but in reality to test the mettle of the young preacher). She thought it time to draw the line; but she at length grew reconciled to the new order of things.

There was one unexpected feature of the new life which charmed each, and that was the remarkable general intelligence of the people. It was no unusual thing to find, rolled up and laid away upon one of the "general utility shelves" of the box houses, a diploma, bearing the seal of some good college, while its owner busied herself with the humbler duties of homekeeping. Men above the average stood behind the counters, or edited the "hustling" newspapers, or doctored one when the native malaria got too deep a hold.

The cosmopolitan character of the new home was shown in the fact that in a single afternoon there were callers whose homes, from which none

had been long away, had been in New York, Virginia, Ohio; and, indeed, nearly every State in the Union was represented in the Sunday congregation.

The new church was to be of stone. Ten miles distant was a ridge of hills which took their name from a beautiful stone found there in great quantities. This was to be used for the front and finishing, and hither the young preacher took many a trip, where he lent a hand in the quarrying.

At last, after more than a year of hard work, the building was completed, and a lovely Sabbath saw its dedication. The deep "Italian" sky, in the language of the local poets, was never bluer than now. The gentle "zephyrs" toned themselves down to suit the occasion as they left the green sward of the prairie, and perhaps there never was a happier congregation than that which gathered that day.

The young pastor, to whom all acknowledge is due the present success of the enterprise, has lost the "student air," and now would be known anywhere as the keenly-alive Western "preacher." He does not consider his work done with the completion of the building; he is now as keenly alive to the spiritual upbuilding of his congregation.

Nor will this last prove a less easy task. Indeed, no pastor, either East or West, will say that it ever

is; yet on the frontier is is especially hard. There is the rush to become established in business, and the temptation to forget God in the hurry is always present. Besides, vice takes on certain more emphatic forms, and happy the leader of a flock that successfully copes with all these; yet in this last work, Asbury Stevenson will not stand alone, for in the heart of his young wife is as strong a hatred of sin as in his. So, leaving them for a time, we bid them God-speed, and adieu.

## XXIV

# A Retrospect—A Wedding—Death of Richard Newcomb

IT has been many years—some wearisome, some joyous—since the group of watchers stood upon the brow of the hill at quaint, picturesque Lynton, and waved us a last adieu, as with the two happy pairs in the great canvas-covered wagons we left its winding, shady street forever. We have since seen the terminus of that long journey, the then western wilds, develop and come to teem with life and a marvelous civilization.

It has been ours to see and note the struggles in the founding and guidance of the homes which were established, that May-day, in the village church at Lynton, and the working out of the individuals' problem of worldly prosperity.

In these two homes, as in every home, there has been constant sowing of seed, either good or bad. The harvest of some has already been garnered; but all seed does not ripen in a year, nor yet in a decade, and as the patient husbandman, having seen to it that his seed possesses the true germinal

principles of life, having planted them, leaves them in perfect faith to the sure offices of nature to effect the growth, and in its season, with unerring sureness, gather the harvest, so we, having watched this daily home-sowing, sometimes with joy, as often with dread, must leave to the years the final gathering.

It will be ours therefore to drop the curtain, nor will it be raised until such a number of years has passed that the fruits of the home growing will be easily recognizable. We hold it yet a moment to note one or two events of interest to us.

The cottage home at Burrtonville again wears a holiday appearance, and we find that Earnest Warren has come to claim his bride, and gentle Ruth Stevenson is to go out from the home forever. Her loss is going to fall heavily upon both father and mother, and as the preparations for the wedding festivities progress, their hearts grow heavier; for from the time that her father had held her in his great strong arms, she a wee winsome babe, she had nestled very near his heart; indeed, in many ways, she was his own counterpart. She had always been so unselfish in her life, an offset in many instances to the more impetuous nature of Louise and of her brothers, it was hard to imagine the home without her.

Yet there was much comfort in knowing that he who was to be her husband was so worthy. He had already won for himself an enviable name as a teacher in the college to which he had gone when his own school-days had ceased. But he desired to pursue still further certain branches of study. An opportunity had offered itself for him to go abroad for a year or two, and he desired that Ruth should accompany him.

Ruth had been, as we know, loth to give up the final years of her college course; but the home needs had seemed to make imperative the acceptance of the position offered her in the academy, so it was with genuine pleasure she looked forward to a year or two of further study with her husband in one of the cities of Germany.

The wedding-day at length dawned. Asbury and his young wife honored it by making it the occasion of their first visit home. Their coming has been heralded for weeks, and there is an undertone of excitement which strikes us as very strange. John the younger, proud of his commission, has driven to fetch them from the train; and see! they are at the gate! Ah! now the mystery is plain. Grandmother Rachel is herself at the carriage, and her great bearded boy has held her in his arms for an instant as he gives her the greeting kiss; but

she hardly notices it, she is so eager and enrapt with the strange, dainty bundle of white cambric and flannel motherly Emma is handing out. Now they are in the house, and O, strange sight! when the little face is uncovered, and she bends to kiss it, she suddenly breaks down, and as her own tears fall fast, no eye of all in the room is dry. Clasping the wondering babe to her breast, she has sobbed aloud, "Sweet, sweet baby Louise!" So has the absent one been remembered.

The student Edward has also come from his books.

The hours fly swiftly, and soon the event which has summoned them is a thing of the past. And Ruth is gone.

Asbury lingered for a few days' visit, of course. The pulpit of the new home church was offered him, and old neighbors and interested friends, who had known him all his life, gathered to hear him preach.

Among them, hardly daring to look up, sat Father and Mother Stevenson. There are some things which can only be imagined; among such is the quiet, thrilling happiness which filled these faithful hearts as they heard their first-born "expound unto them the things of God." But could this strangely earnest, free, and at all times really

eloquent young speaker be their own quiet, shy child?

Ah, brave hearts, it was yours in the years you had, not only him, but his brothers and sisters as well, with you in the little plain log home, to lay the foundations of the character each is developing. You, indeed, builded better than you knew with your own simple faith; but there came a day when your last molding touch was given and you yielded them to others. In your own humble lives you little guessed the breadth of soul, the enlargement of vision, that should come to each through the study and associations of their college life. And in the case of this your first-born, within the last years, God has been his teacher in the school of experience, and as you hear his burning words you may well say humbly, "What hath God wrought!"

A few days, and the visitors are gone. Of the many that once gathered about the table, but John and Rose are left, and the father says, "We must all love each other the more."

* * * * *

We hold the curtain yet a little longer, this time to catch a glimpse of a procession that, with a sable hearse and nodding plumes, slowly winds its way to the city of the dead. Before we join in its

measured tread we shall have to take a glance westward.

Following the marriage of Ruth, Asbury had been back in his Western pastorate perhaps about two years. These had been spent in hard work. Falls City was not a very promising field for a teacher of morality. It is true his beautiful church was a standing invitation to all who would to enter and worship, yet it took all the efforts of the watchful and alert young pastor to withstand the steady attacks of sin and vice which in the first years of every Western town contended for mastery.

That plague-spot of civilization, the open drink-shop, flourished unrestrained by law. There would be days and nights when, from the adjoining ranches, "cowboys," as those having charge of the great herds of cattle there were called, would gather in, drink, gamble, and hold a carnival of sin. At such times the terrified inhabitants could only close their doors and windows, and listen in dread to the crack of the pistol, which told of the summary settlement of some fancied insult.

Because of all this, it was not with a great deal of surprise that, on a morning following a "cowboy raid," Asbury received a hasty summons to visit a man who had been shot in some kind of a *mêlée* during the night, and was said to be dying. Yet if

the message gave him no surprise, a bit of information volunteered on the way did. It was to the effect that the wounded man had particularly asked for him by name. Who among all the wild men gathered there knew him?

Soon he was shown into a little, narrow, low room, where, upon a bed, lay—could he believe his eyes?—his once brilliant playmate and friend, Richard Newcomb.

Asbury Stevenson had learned something of his Master's tenderness during these years of trial. His old rigid notions had insensibly softened; he had been growing, in these latter days, to look beyond the sinner to the causes that made him such, and now Louise could not herself have knelt more tenderly than did he, nor could her touch have been gentler than was that of this elder brother of hers, who was filled with ineffable pity as he beheld his old-time comrade.

The wounded man was still conscious. "No, he can not live," said the physician, "nor will it hasten his end if he is carefully removed." This in answer to an anxious question of Asbury. In an hour, Richard was lying in the cool, little spare-room of the parsonage, and Emma was ministering to his needs.

After intervals of pain, fragments of his story

were gleaned, and piecing them together the Stevensons guessed the last few months had been full of dissipation, spent somewhere further west. There he had learned of Asbury's residence here, and a longing desire to look on them seized him. He had not yet fully decided whether or no he would make himself known, and had gone to the hotel. He had but lately lost his all at the gambling-table, and that night he thought he saw his opportunity to win back a part of his loss. Somehow, at the cards—he could not tell how—trouble had arisen, and he knew no more.

After he had told this much, he sank into a stupor, from which nothing could arouse him. Some time during the next day, as Emma was performing some little office at the bedside, Baby Louise toddled up, and stooping to take her in her arms, Emma called her by name. Suddenly the great dark eyes of the stranger opened, and lighted up with something of their old-time beauty, and bent a questioning look, first upon the child and then upon the mother. Divining his thought, Emma bent and whispered:

"Yes, we named her for Louise."

A wistful look grew in the eyes, which Emma thought she understood, and bending she smoothed a place and laid the little Louise beside him. To

her surprise the child did not shrink, but with her baby hands gently stroked his face. And thus he died.

Ah, little Louise! was it some subtle influence, of whose laws we as yet know nothing, that, coming from the great heart of her whose name you bear, caused this baby act that comforted the dying man? Who can tell?

"No, he must not lie in a western grave. With our going, there will be none to bear him in remembrance. His body must lie by his mother's, at home." It was Emma who had spoken, as she, with her husband, stood over the lifeless clay, which lay with the old-time beauty restored in every feature.

"*And she*"—and Asbury's voice grew very tender, and his eyes instinctively turned toward the Orient—"would not want him to go to his grave unattended."

In a few hours, all that was mortal of Richard Newcomb was being carried eastward, and a solitary, saddened man accompanied it. Very content was he in his humbleness to leave the spirit with the Great Judge, who knoweth the soul environments of us all, and in his judgment has promised to remember that we are dust.

And it is this body we have seen borne to the

grave. It had lain in the old home over night; but once was the covering removed. The watchers in the adjacent room were startled by the sound of footfalls. Quietly looking, they saw an old man, bent, yet not with the weight of years, go slowly to the bier, lift the lid, and place therein a silver head. No, they could not be mistaken; for the delicate golden leaves of laurel glistened even in that dim light. Having placed it, he bent a moment over the still rarely beautiful face, and with a groan turned away.

A few weeks later another grave was made, and William Newcomb was no more. Poor Therese must have died under all these cruel blows had it not been for the Christian faith she had learned. But her future seemed, indeed, without a ray of promise. So at least it seemed to her, as in her sister's elegant room—it was impossible for her to remain alone in the great house—she sat rocking Marie's baby, William. Was there any use, after all, for her to try? She had tried, O so hard, and just when her own and her father's heart seemed knitting in the closest sympathy, these last trials had come; and now he, her last friend, was gone. No, it was no use to try.

Just then the door opened, and the housemaid entered and handed her a letter. "It is from Ruth,"

said she, as she broke the seal. Yes, it was from Ruth, who wrote such gracious, tender words of sympathy that poor Therese wept as she had not during all these dreadful days. Then followed words of comfort. Who has not realized that there are times when the most comforting thought that can come is, that "there is somebody else who cares?" Finally came the glad news that they were to return shortly, and the half-playful, half-in-earnest injunction to keep up her studies, and that Earnest was very sure he could find a place for her as teacher.

"And, mind, you are to live with us."

Wise Ruth; she knew Therese's surest means of happiness lay, as does every one's, in work. A grief that folds its hands is soon well named despair; hence she sought, and did arouse her to action; for as she finished the letter, she said, with an air of decision, "No, I will not give up."

But our curtain refuses to remain longer, so we leave, not only Therese, but all the others, in whom we have grown interested, to the tender mercies of the years.

## XXV

## A Family Reunion—Gathered Thistles

EIGHTEEN hundred and ninety-three! How much may happen in a decade! Yet if we add to that, one, yet another, as we must, since we last looked in upon our friends, the changes may be startling. If this is true of a family, it is none the less so of a nation.

With the rapid march of the years, almost the last trace, except in the hearts that still ache, of the dreadful war which threatened at one time to devastate both North and South, has been wiped out. During these years, cities have been planted, or, already existing as little more than villages, have grown with a rapidity that would startle even Aladdin himself.

The new forces of steam and electricity have revolutionized the commonest affairs of life. One can now whiz by on a car, drawn, as the ancients would have said, by magic; or, by a trick of the same conjurer, talk with a friend a thousand miles away, recognizing the very intonations and peculiar inflections of the voice; and yet staid history as-

sures us that this wonderful land, which has shown such a marvelous capacity for development, was but four short centuries ago unknown to civilization; but at that time an intrepid mariner sailed out from the known into the unknown, and after a journey of which every detail is now hunted and made much of, he was able to lay at the feet of the old civilization this New World, brimming over, as he himself little guessed, with possibilities for the future.

Of course, its great rivers were then as yet unknown, its great inland seas unsuspected, and its cities unbuilt. Still, its mere finding was a great event, and therefore it is little wonder that the nations of the earth, looking back through the centuries, resolved to celebrate the anniversary of its finding, and, to do so, had arranged to bring the choicest products of their civilization and exhibit them on a scale of magnificence hitherto unattempted. The winds caught up the story of this coming splendor, and wafted it across meadow and hill, heather and steppes. The current carried it beneath the waves, and whispered it to the dwellers in the region beyond, and the eyes and thoughts of the world turned America-ward.

Among the many little knots or groups who, under their own sky and in their own tongue, discussed the wonders that were to be seen by a

journey across the ocean, there is but one that interests us.

In a well-built mission-house in one of the interior cities of China a little group of missionaries has lingered, evidently to talk over "something." A large company of comfortably and neatly clad girls have just marched out of the chapel; for the "mustard-seed" has taken deep root, grown, and spread itself, not unlike its Scriptural ancestor. Instead of the erstwhile narrow, dirty little room in a wretched part of the city, now, on one of the choicest knolls, with grounds enough about them to give the inmates a breath of God's pure air, stands a cluster of buildings, upon which they who planted in tears, look with genuine pride. Besides the comfortable home for the missionaries, there is a roomy school-building, in which is the chapel we have just seen. The dream of a "girls' college" is a reality.

Let us glance for a moment at the missionary group. Most of them are reinforcements from the home-land, hence strangers to us; but we are at once attracted to a bright, happy—yes, happy, though it seems a happiness born of pain—face of a woman whose brown wavy hair is beginning to be thickly sprinkled with silver. She has left the organ, over whose keys her fingers have been idly

straying, and is joining the little group who are eagerly discussing some question. As she comes up, one speaks, evidently for all, "No, we can not all go, much as we would like to; but one can be spared from the work, and that one must be our brave, cheery worker, Louise, who in all these years has never been to the home-land." "Yes, so say we all."

Louise Stevenson—for it is she—stands for a moment strangely disconcerted. For months, they of the mission-house have been reading of the wonderful happenings at home; but better to each than sight of sculptor's dream in marble or of artist's sublimest conception would be to look again into the dear faces at home, or to sit at the ingleside where mother was wont to hum a lullaby, and for weeks, as the world's procession of travelers America-ward grew, this thought has taken root and grown at the mission-house, "Can not at least one of us go?" And it was this they had lingered to discuss, and their decision we have heard.

At length, Louise spoke, and her voice trembled: "Well, I do n't want to seem selfish"—at this they, knowing her peculiarly unselfish life, smiled—"but it seems strange that father and mother should still live. Sometimes it seems that I *must* see them again, and then I can contentedly return, and—"

But she did not finish the sentence with her voice, but involuntarily her eyes sought a little, sacred spot, visible from the chapel window, where, during the years, workers had one by one lain down to rest. So it was settled. Louise, the hard-working missionary, was going home, and an outgoing steamer carried the news homeward the very next day.

Again and again, during all these long years, she had expected to go; but the needs had been so urgent, and she had seemed so well adapted to the work; besides, her health had been good, while that of other missionaries had failed, and when they had been ordered home for rest, she had always been able to fill up the breach. And none knew better than the group of missionaries in the chapel—indeed, the whole Board of Missions as well, who proudly pointed to "our college"—that its inception and its steady march towards success was due to the clear brain and indomitable perseverance of her who was now to take her first vacation.

From that hour when she had held entranced with her voice her first unclean, half-clothed audience, she had known no rest. She had used her pen vigorously, and, in response, welcome donations came in for the proposed college. The fame of her voice grew until it reached and captured the ear of

many of the better class. Nor was that her sole secret. Her cheery face won friends, and her complete self-abnegation—indeed she seemed to have lost all thought of self, and to be lost in her work—with her instinctive sympathy and helpfulness, won the hearts of all who came in contact with her.

The peculiar rescue-work of the mission sometimes uncovered such loathsome cases of misery, that occasionally one less brave than she would shrink. Sometimes the girls who came to them were little tiny tots, who had come into the world only to suffer at the hands of parents or friends. Such Louise would take into her own arms, bathe, and clothe.

And now she was going home! The news flew, and when the day came for her to sail, she passed through long dusky ranks that had gathered to do her honor; but alas for overstrained nature, in the stress some of these forgot their studied parts, and could only wail aloud in true Oriental style!

* * * * *

As the ship bears Louise homeward, we pause to gather up a few broken threads of the past.

"Louise is coming home!" With strangely blurred eyes, an old man had sat down to read aloud the letter, bearing the strange foreign post-

mark they had come to know so well, and the first few lines he read told the story.

Grandmother Rachel was sitting in her easy-chair by the windows of the "new rooms" she had planned so long ago. Her joy at hearing the glad announcement must be imagined. Later, as she wiped her glasses, she said, "And the other children must come too, and we will see them all together again before we go hence." But before that joyful gathering, we shall have to ask why we find them sitting so contentedly in the old home.

Their youngest son had made good his boyish vow, registered over the glossy mane of his favorite "Beauty." Perhaps a rapid sketch of his life would not be amiss.

William Newcomb, in his brightest days, had not possessed a greater desire to "get on in the world" than did this country boy; but there was this difference: The lad was God-serving and God-fearing, and, as we have seen, in his earliest years began by rendering back unto God a part of all his gains, yet withal he possessed true business acuteness. He was greatly fascinated by Asbury's stories of western life, and resolved to visit that marvelous country at the earliest opportunity. He had a reason for this that he was not yet ready to share with any one. That Arizona land haunted

him like a nightmare. He had read and studied with interest everything that came in his way since he had had the "worthless deed" in his possession. Once he had read that copper had been found, yet not in quantities that would make its "reduction" profitable. "What if"—and this was his own little dream, that lightened many a homely task these days—"what if this particular bit of land should possess the valued metal?" Therefore he could scarcely conceal his satisfaction when one July morning found him journeying west, with a whole month at his disposal. Once in Asbury's home, he was not long in making his plans known, and a week later he had started on a tour of personal inspection.

The land was easily located. Instead of being a part of a continuous plain, as he had supposed, he found it broken, with here and there great rocky fissures, and not greatly distant from the mountains. He did not fail to feel the pulse of local opinion concerning its value. "Arid," "worthless," the precise terms used by the lawyer years ago, and his own observations, as he wearily tramped over it, confirmed the verdict.

The old scene in the lawyer's office came back to him, and though he could not have explained why, he experienced a new sense of loss. Until

now he had not guessed how much he had builded upon these acres. In his tramp he had neared a gulch, and being wearied in body he sat down upon a ledge of rock, and sitting there gave vent to the disappointment he could not but feel.

"How useless this part of creation, anyway!" That mountain over there, he had been told, contained, not only copper, as he had read, but metals even more precious, but worthless, all because coal had to be brought from such a distance.

"But what is that?" As he half lay, half sat, he had been mechanically kicking at an unoffending stone that lay a little looser than its fellows. Instantly his old lessons in geology with Louise flashed upon him. "I believe that is a surface indication of coal!" What if it were? His heart bounded, for that very morning he had been told how profitable copper-mining would be if there were only coal.

He examined more closely, then returned to his stopping-place, and later returned with pick and shovel, and soon became convinced of the proximity of coal. How much he did not know; this he left for those of more experience.

He anxiously watched the workers for the next two days, and heard, almost as an echo of one of his dreams, "It is a good paying vein!"

The news spread. With characteristic western push, a company was formed, and within a week he had received an offer that equaled in value the old home farm.

John suddenly lost all interest in a further western trip, and hastened home with the surprising news. We shall make no attempt to depict the surprise of the home-folk. The offer was too gladly accepted, and was used at once in the repurchase of the old farm; and with characteristic honesty, the few hundreds in excess of what was needed for this was given to Therese for her father's sake.

This was the beginning of solid wealth for John junior; for his parents rightly said the farm ought to be his. In this his brothers and sisters concurred, so the transfer papers were made out. He thought so well of the coal-mining company that had been formed, that he persuaded his father to loan him a few hundred dollars to buy stock. In less than two years it had paid for itself and more; but this was his last "speculation." He decided the business too fraught with anxieties.

The log-house had gone the way of the earth; but the added rooms, in which the younger Rachel had taken such a pride, were still good, and after being remodeled would make a cheery "evening

place" for the father and mother; and it was here we saw them at the reopening of this story. In the course of time, John had built his own great, roomy house by the side of these—indeed, connected by a door—and here, at the reopening, he lives with his wife and growing family of boys and girls.

A swift successor to Beauty carries him back and forth to his business; for the old mills, remodeled and rebuilt, have been his for many a day. A steady business man is he, recognized in the home Church as one of its thoroughgoing, truest friends.

"Louise is coming home!" The news flew. All agreed in the wish of their mother that they should celebrate her coming by a family gathering. She would arrive about the first of May. Happy thought! Why not celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the wedding that occurred in Lynton in 'forty-three?

The broad acres of the old farm had never looked more beautiful than they did that bright May morning, when the great farmhouse seemed literally alive with guests and children. Rose had not far to come; she was the wife of the prosperous farmer who owned the acres adjoining. Her own and her brother John's young people had been jealously watching the great orchard, that for more

than a week had been a snowy mass of bloom. Grandmother had told of the old, sweet wedding decorations, and it had been their wish to reproduce them. "Would the blossoms fade too soon?" was the absorbing question. A row of Winter Greenings answered by delaying their bloom two whole weeks after the others, and, when the anniversary dawned, were radiant in their beauty. Great bowlfuls stood in every nook and corner, and Rose's eldest, a sweet lass of twelve, named Rachel, capped the climax when she pinned a spray at her grandmother's breast, and arranged a smart, modern boutonniere for her grandfather's lapel.

The Rev. Asbury and family had arrived. His hair is whitening rapidly. It is yet an interesting question in psychology whether or not one grows to be so affected by his profession or calling that it becomes in a sort of a way a kind of badge. At any rate, you would have taken this man for a preacher anywhere, and a Western one at that. Perhaps the unconventional style of his dress and demeanor suggested the latter, or it may have been his ready utterance and earnestness in regard to sins both private and national. There is not really a hint of conservatism in his whole make-up.

God has been very gracious in his dealings with this our erstwhile young minister, and he has be-

come a strong factor in both Church and State. The word "State" is used advisedly; for during these last twenty years a great moral triumph has been won, and when the tocsin of war sounded, he and his brethren to a man girt on their swords of ready argument, convincing logic, and prayer of faith. They spoke while standing on goods-boxes on the open streets on week-days, and within pulpits on the Sabbath. Every schoolhouse became an orator's platform from which this new movement was heralded. There could be but one result. To-day, in all that State, there is not a legalized place like that in which Richard Newcomb received his death-wound.

Those were heroic days! The younger children, even now, love to gather while Aunt Emma tells of burning churches, of threatened lynchings, and sometimes of bloodshed.

Edward, the quiet scholar, the ready writer, and apt scientist, is also here. His "maiden article" was followed by many others. To-day he is a valuable contributor to many of the current periodicals. Contrary to his mother's expectations, he, too, entered the ministry, but under circumstances very different from those of his brother Asbury, for his first charge was a city mission. He did most excellent service here for two years, and it was here he

found his bride. She had grown up in a parsonage. His ministerial prospects seemed unusually bright; but just at this juncture his *Alma Mater* gave him an urgent call to teach in its halls, offering him, what he most loved, the Sciences. Finally he yielded. It was as well, for time has proven him a rare educator. To-day he is a recognized authority upon botany. Go into your high school, and more than likely the authorized text-book on that science will bear his name.

Ruth Warren and her husband, with their children, have come from the far West. For years he has been president of a Western college that is taking front rank among its more pretentious Eastern sisters. It would take a great deal of time and space to tell the half of Ruth's life-successes. She has been the companion, fellow-student, and inspiration of her husband. She is an intelligent factor in the Church, and a sweet and gracious mother; in short, her womanhood is but the fruitage of the promise of her girlhood.

But the center of attraction to all, even to the elders as well as the younger ones, was a sweet-faced elderly woman, with frost-sprinkled hair, of whom at first the younger ones stood a little in awe. How could they think a missionary, whom they had never seen, a bit of common flesh and blood like

themselves! But a few cheery laughs from the missionary, and that vanished. And how proud they were of their own Aunt Louise, of whom each had heard all their lives! Is it true, or do we imagine it, that sometimes her gaze rests most lovingly upon that other sweet young Louise Stevenson, the babe of twenty years ago, who has just completed the course at her "Uncle Earnest's college," or that with a peculiar fondness she caresses the soft white hand that lies in her lap? Perhaps, though, it is all our fancy, for she is the life of the gathering. What marvelous stories she tells of far-away China and of the mission life! It all sounds so grand, that half the younger ones are secretly resolving to become missionaries.

We had not noticed that in this group there are two strange faces—not strange, either, for we have seen them before. One of them is sitting near Ruth Warren. It is the quiet, happy face of Therese, with the heartache all gone.

All of Ruth's written promises were fulfilled. After she and her husband had returned and he was settled in his work, he did interest himself in her behalf and secured for her a position as teacher. So it came about that she made her home with Ruth as was suggested. Ruth greatly encouraged her to active Christian work, and in her heart

grew up the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and the dreadful past slipped away. Finally, when one of the best and most prosperous business men of the city asked the really handsome Mrs. Les Page to share his name and home, she consented. There was little romantic fervor about this second marriage, but Therese was as well satisfied. Since that day her life has been a constant joy, and a happy circle of boys and girls is growing up around her hearthstone.

That remarkably handsome lad over there, who, with a careless grace, has just thrown his arm about Aunt Louise, somewhat to the discomfiture of the latter's own nieces and nephews, is Therese's eldest. She calls him Richard.

Marie, too, is here to honor the day. She and her daughters are resplendent in elegant clothes. She is quite as dainty and pretty as ever. Her husband is a careful business man, and there is no reason to think that life will ever be otherwise than what it is, a succession of luxuries; but she feels strangely out of place among those to whom, though neat and well-dressed, clothes are only a necessary adjunct, and whose conversation runs entirely upon questions and topics of which she has scarcely heard.

Poor Marie! she has lived and is living her nar-

row little life. The prevailing styles and petty local society triumphs have been her horizon. She reads a little of the daily papers, especially that part which describes society's doings, indulges in a novel occasionally; but of the great world of thought and of the day's moral battles she is ignorant. Pity for poor Marie and her kind!

Her daughters have neither her beauty nor her dainty ways. Indeed, as we catch the startling slang that falls from their lips, we fear they border on rudeness. Margaret, the eldest, is older than Asbury's Louise. She is already a *blasé* young lady, who has quaffed every cup of pleasure society has to offer. She, with her younger sisters, finds this gathering very "stupid," although the young folks have planned bicycle races up and down the shady, graveled lane, and are performing miracles of grace with Indian clubs and dumb-bells, and have even, after a great deal of trouble, erected a tennis court in the grassy meadow beyond. "But such things are so childish."

We have spent so much time in noting the guests, we can hardly look in at the groaning table, nor pause to offer our congratulations and well-wishes to the aged pair whose hearts are so happy to-day. Nor can we stop to listen to the fun of the

younger ones, nor even study the characteristics of any of this younger generation, except to say that all bear the imprint of health. The mother of each set of children, whether in college town, Kansas parsonage, or of the free life of the farm, has made physical culture a specialty. Their clothes are made for a purpose, rather than for an end. Though one or two of the group have reached and passed the twentieth year, yet the talk is still of study; so we infer they are all walking closely in the paths of their elders. But the day is waning; Marie has gone to her home, and Therese and her children have accompanied them.

The brothers and sisters gather in the dusk in the great parlors, and much of the family history is recounted. Reminiscence follows reminiscence, and it is not strange that often the hearty laugh rings out. But the reflections are not all thus cheerful; for that other happy couple, who began life also fifty years before, is remembered, and all grow hushed in genuine pity as the name is mentioned. Nor can much be said, for that sorrow lies too close to the heart of one of their own.

This aged couple has indeed reason for thanksgiving. As their children gather about them, each comes as a servant of the King; and what matters

it whether the world ever bestows its plaudits, the consciousness of an honest, upright life is sufficient reward!

"To have acted well our little part—
There all the honor lies."

* * * * *

In the dusk of that same evening, a solitary figure, that of a woman, might have been seen picking her way among the older graves of the city cemetery. Presently she paused beside a sunken one, and leaning upon the plain shaft which marked it, she murmured the one word, "Richard!"

During this day of rejoicing, brave Louise Stevenson had gone about with such an ache tugging at her heart as her family little guessed.

When the tall and well formed lads and lasses had gathered about her and begged for a song, or the younger ones with greater freedom had clambered upon her knee, she had realized anew the depth of her loss, in that woman's richest crown of wifehood and motherhood had been denied her. Further, it had been borne in upon her that she was a stranger in her own land, and though her family held her dear, yet they had learned to do without her. She had lost her place among them; plainly her "niche" was no longer here, but across the sea.

In a short time she must turn her face eastward. A few more years of work, and then her body would rest, not here, as might have been its right, but there, in a mission "God's Acre." Abandoning herself to her grief, she knelt by the grave of her youthful lover. The past came back so plainly. How beautiful he had been! how generous! how warm the impulses of his heart! how gifted! To what heights might he have climbed! But kneeling there, as with lightning flash, she saw the fatal web that had been woven about him from his very boyhood. She heard again the mazy tread of the home dance, caught the sparkle of the home wines, and listened to the cynical sneer concerning things holy.

She beheld the web tighten as the temptations of college-life assailed him, and recalled the proud boast of his chosen college, that it was "broad, liberal, and unhampered by the narrowness of creed."

"My Darling Richard!" she moaned in her agony. "It is indeed true, men can not gather grapes from planted thistles, and your wrecked life was after all but natural fruitage."

But alas, that the harvest should be so bitter!

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